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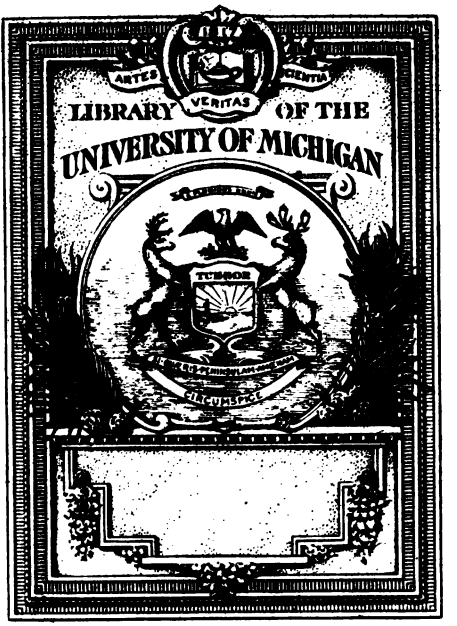

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SIMPLE TALES:

BY

MRS. OPIE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.

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SIMPLE TALES.

THE

BLACK VELVET PELISSE.

Mr. Beresford was a merchant, engaged in a very extensive business, and possessed of considerable property, a great part of which was vested in a large estate in the country, on which he chiefly resided.

Beresford was what is commonly denominated *purse-proud*; and so eager to be honoured on account of his wealth, that he shunned rather than courted the society of men of rank, as he was fond of power and precedence, and did not

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like to associate with those who had an indisputable claim to that deference of which he himself was desirous. But he earnestly wished that his only child and heiress should marry a man of rank; and being informed that a young baronet of large estates in his neighbourhood, and who was also heir to a barony, was just returned from his travels, and intended to settle at his paternal seat, Mr. Beresford was resolved that Julia should have every possible opportunity of showing off to the best advantage before so desirable a neighbour; and he determined that his daughter, his house, and his table, should not want any charm which money could procure.

Beresford had gained his fortune by degrees; and having been educated by frugal and retired parents, his habits were almost parsimonious; and when he launched out into unwonted expenses on becoming wealthy, it was only in a partial man-

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ner. His house and his furniture had a sort of pye-bald appearance;—his style of living was not consistent, like that of a man used to live like a gentleman, but opulence with a timid grasp seemed to squeeze out its indulgences from the griping fingers of habitual œconomy.—True, he could, on occasion, be splendid, both in his public and private gifts; but such bounties were efforts, and he seemed to wonder at himself whenever the exertion was over.

Julia Beresford, his daughter, accustomed from her birth to affluence, if not to luxury,—and having in every thing what is called the spirit of a gentlewoman, was often distressed and mortified at the want of consistency in her father's mode of living; but she was particularly distressed to find that, though he was always telling her what a fortune he would give her when she married, and at his death, he allowed her but a trifling sum, compara-

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tively, for pocket-money, and required from her, with teasing minuteness, an account of the manner in which her allowance was spent; reprobating very severely her propensity to spend her money on plausible beggars and pretended invalids.

But on this point he talked in vain:—used by a benevolent and pious mother, whose loss she tenderly deplored, to impart comfort to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, Julia endeavoured to make her residence in the country a blessing to the neighbourhood; but, too often, kind words, soothing visits, and generous promises, were all that she had to bestow; and many a time did she purchase the means of relieving a distressed fellow-creature by a personal sacrifice: for though ever ready to contribute to a subscription either public or private, Beresford could not be prevailed upon to indulge his daughter by giving way to that habitual bene-

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volence, which, when once practised, can never be left off.

But though the sums were trifling which Julia had to bestow, she had so many cheap charities in her power, such as sending broth to the neighbouring cottages, and making linen of various sorts for poor women and children, that she was deservedly popular in the neighbourhood; and though her father was reckoned as proud as he was rich, the daughter was pronounced to be a pattern of good nature, and as affable as he was the contrary.

But wherever Beresford could have an opportunity of displaying his wealth to advantage, he regarded not expense:—and to outvie the neighbouring gentlemen in endeavours to attract the rich young baronet, whom all the young ladies would, he supposed, be aiming to captivate, he purchased magnificent furniture and carriages, and promised Julia a great addition

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to her wardrobe, whenever sir Frederic Mortimer should take up his abode at his seat.

Julia heard that the baronet was expected, with a beating heart. She had been several times in his company at a watering-place, immediately on his return from abroad, and had wished to appear as charming in his eyes as he appeared in hers; but she had been disappointed.—Modest and retiring in her manner, and not showy in her person, though her features were regularly beautiful, sir Frederic Mortimer, who had only seen her in large companies, and with very striking and attractive women, had regarded her merely as an amiable girl, and had rarely thought of her again.

Julia Beresford was formed to steal upon the affections by slow degrees; to interest on acquaintance, not to strike at first sight. But the man who had op-

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portunities of listening to the sweet tones of her voice, and of gazing on her varied countenance when emotion crimsoned her pale cheek, and lighted up the expression of her eyes, could never behold her without a degree of interest which beauty alone often fails to excite. Like most women, too, Julia derived great advantages from dress: of this she was sensible, though very often did she appear shabbily attired, from having expended on others sums destined to ornament herself; but, when she had done so, a physiognomist would have discovered in her countenance probably an expression of self-satisfaction, more ornamental than any dress could be. But, generally, as Julia knew the value of external decoration, she wisely wished to indulge in it.

One day Julia, accompanied by her father, went to the shop of a milliner, in a large town, near which they lived; and,

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as winter was coming on, and her pelisse, a dark and now faded purple, was nearly worn out, she was very desirous of purchasing a black velvet one, which was on sale; but her father hearing that the price of it was twelve guineas, positively forbid her to wish for so expensive a piece of finery; though he owned that it was very handsome, and very becoming.

"To be sure," said Julia smiling, but casting a longing look at the pelisse, "twelve guineas might be better bestowed:" and they left the shop.

The next day Mr. Beresford went to town on business, and, in a short time after, he wrote to his daughter to say that he had met sir Frederic Mortimer in London, and that he would soon be down at his seat, to attend some pony races which Mr. Hanmer, who had a mind to show off his dowdy daughter to the young baronet, intended to have on a piece of

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land belonging to him; and that he had heard all the ladies in the neighbourhood were to be there.

"I have received an invitation for you and myself," continued Mr. Beresford; "and therefore, as I am resolved the miss Traceys, and the other girls, shall not be better or more expensively dressed than my daughter, I enclose you bills to the amount of thirteen pounds; and I desire you to go and purchase the velvet pelisse which we so much admired; and I have sent you a hat, the most elegant which money could procure, in order that my heiress may appear as an heiress should do."

Julia's young heart beat with pleasure at this permission; for she was to adorn herself to appear before the only man whom she ever *wished* to please: and the next morning she determined to set off to make the desired purchase.

That evening, being alone, she set out to take her usual walk; and having, lost

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in no unpleasing reverie, strayed very near to a village about three miles from home, she recollected to have heard an affecting account of the distress of a very virtuous and industrious family in that village, owing to the poor man's being drawn for the militia, and not rich enough to procure a substitute.—She therefore resolved to go on and inquire how the matter had terminated. Julia proceeded to the village, and reached it just as the very objects of her solicitude were come to the height of their distresses.

The father of the family, not being able to raise more than half the money wanted, was obliged to serve; and Julia, on seeing a crowd assembled, approached to ask what was going forward; and found she was arrived to witness a very affecting scene; for the poor man was taking his last farewel of his wife and family, who, on his departure to join the regiment, would be forced to go to the workhouse, where, as they were in deli-

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cate health, it was most probable they would soon fall victims to bad food and bad air.

The poor man was universally beloved in his village; and the neighbours, seeing that a young lady inquired concerning his misfortunes with an air of interest, were all eager to give her every possible information on the subject of his distress.—"And only think, miss," said one of them, "for the want of nine pound only, as honest and hard-working a lad as ever lived, and as good a husband and father, must be forced to leave his family, and be a militia-man,—and they, poor things, go to the workhouse!"

"Nine pounds!" said Julia, "would that be sufficient to keep him at home?"

"La! yes, miss; for that young fellow yonder would gladly go for him for eighteen pounds!"

On hearing this, how many thoughts rapidly succeeded each other in Julia's

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mind!—If she paid the nine pounds, the man would be restored to his family, and they preserved perhaps from an untimely death in a workhouse!—But then she had no money but what her father had sent to purchase the pelisse, nor was she to see him till she met him on the race-ground!—and he would be so disappointed if she was not well dressed! True, she might take the pelisse on trust; but then she was sure her father would be highly incensed at her extravagance, if she spent twelve guineas, and gave away nine pounds at the same time:—therefore she knew she must either give up doing a generous action, or give up the pelisse, that is, give up the gratification of her father's pride and her own vanity.

"No, I dare not, I cannot do it," thought Julia; "my own vanity I would willingly mortify,—but not my father's.—No—the poor man must go!"

During this mental struggle the by-

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standers had eagerly watched her countenance; and thinking that she was disposed to pay the sum required, they communicated their hopes to the poor people themselves; and as Julia turned her eyes towards them, the wretched couple looked at her with such an imploring look! but she was resolved:—"I am sorry, I am very sorry," said she, "that I can do nothing for you:—however, take this." So saying, she gave them all the loose money she had in her pocket, amounting to a few shillings, and then with an aching heart walked rapidly away; but as she did so, the sobs of the poor woman, as she leaned on her husband's shoulder, and the cries of the little boy, when his father, struggling with his grief, bade him a last farewel, reached her, and penetrated to her heart.

"Poor creatures!" she inwardly exclaimed; "and nine pounds would change these tears into gladness, and yet I with-

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hold it! And is it for this that Heaven has blest me with opulence? for this, to be restrained, by the fear of being reproved for spending a paltry sum such as this is, from doing an action acceptable in the eyes of my Creator! No; I will pay the money. I will give myself the delight of serving afflicted worth, and spare myself from, perhaps, eternal self-reproach!"

She then, without waiting for further consideration, turned back again, paid the money into the poor man's hand; and giving the remaining four pounds to the woman, who, though clean, was miserably clad, desired her to lay part of it out in clothes for herself and children.

I will not attempt to describe the surprise and gratitude of the relieved sufferers, nor the overwhelming feelings which Julia experienced; who, withdrawing herself with the rapidity of lightning from their thanks, and wishing to remain unknown, ran hastily along her road

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home, not daring to stop, lest her joy at having done a generous deed should be checked by other considerations.

But at length exhausted, and panting for breath, she was obliged to relax in her speed; and then the image of her angry and disappointed parent appeared to her in all its terrors.

"What can I do?" she exclaimed.—"Shall I order the pelisse, though I can't pay for it, or go without it? No; I ought not to incur so great an expense without my father's leave, though I know him to be able to afford it; and to run in debt he would consider as even a greater fault than the other. Well, then,—I must submit to mortify his pride; and though I rejoice in what I have done, the joy is amply counterbalanced by the idea of giving pain to my father."

Poor Julia! her own wounded vanity came in for its share in causing her uneasiness; and the rest of that day, and the

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next, Julia spent in reflections and fears, which did not tend to improve her looks, and make a becoming dress unnecessary.

The next morning was the morning for the races. The sun shone bright, and every thing looked cheerful but Julia. She had scarcely spirits to dress herself. It was very cold; therefore she was forced to wear her faded purple pelisse, and now it looked shabbier than usual; and still shabbier from the contrast of a very smart new black velvet bonnet.

At length Julia had finished her toilette, saying to herself, "My father talked of Mr. Hanmer's dowdy daughter. I am sure Mr. Hanmer may return the compliment;" and then, with a heavy heart, she got into the carriage, and drove to the house of rendezvous.

Mr. Beresford was there before her; and while he contemplated with fearful admiration the elegant cloaks, and fine showy figures and faces of the miss Tra-

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ceys, between whose father and himself there had long been a rivalship of wealth, he was consoled for their elegance by reflecting how much more expensive and elegant Julia's dress would be, and how well she would look, flushed, as he expected to see her, with the blush of emotion on entering a full room, and the consciousness of more than usual attraction in her appearance.

Julia at length appeared, but pale, dejected, and in her old purple pelisse!

What a mortification! His daughter, the great heiress, the worst dressed and most dowdy looking girl in the company! Insupportable! Scarcely could he welcome her, though he had not seen her for some days; and he seized the very first opportunity of asking her if she had received the notes.

"Yes, I thank ye, sir;" replied Julia.

"Then why did you not buy what I bade you? It could not be gone; for, if

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you did not buy it, nobody else could, I am sure."

"I—I—I thought I could do without it—and—"

"There now, there is perverseness.—When I wished you not to have it, then you wanted it; and now—I protest if I don't believe you did it on purpose to mortify me; and there's those proud minxes, whose father is not worth half what I am, are dressed out as fine as princesses. I vow, girl, you look so shabby and ugly, I can't bear to look at you!"

What a trial for Julia! her eyes filled with tears; and at this moment sir Frederic Mortimer appproached her, and hoped she had not been ill; but he thought she was paler than usual:—

"Paler!" cried her father; "why, I should not have known her, she has made such a fright of herself."

"You may say so, sir," replied the baro-

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net politely, though he almost agreed with him; "but no other man can be of that opinion."

Julia was rather gratified by this speech; but, without waiting for an answer, sir Frederic had gone to join the miss Traceys; and as he entered into an animated conversation with them, Julia was allowed, unattended, to walk to a window in the next room, and enjoy her own melancholy reflections.

At length, to Julia's great relief, they were summoned to the race-ground; the baronet taking miss Hanmer under one arm and the elder miss Tracey under the other,—"So," cried Beresford, seizing Julia roughly by the hand, "I must lead you, I see; for who will take any notice of such a dowdy? Well, girl, I was too proud of you, and you have contrived to humble me enough."

There was a mixture of tenderness and resentment in this speech, which quite

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overcame Julia, and she burst into tears. "There,—now she is going to make herself worse, by spoiling her eyes.—But come, tell me what you did with the money; I insist upon knowing."

"I—I—gave it away," sobbed out Julia.

"Gave it away! Monstrous! I protest I will not speak to you again of a month." So saying, he left her, and carefully avoided to look at or speak to her again.

The races began, and were interesting to all but Julia, who, conscious of being beheld by her father with looks of mortification and resentment, and by the man of her choice with indifference, had no satisfaction to enable her to support the unpleasantness of her situation, except the consciousness that her sorrow had been the cause of happiness to others, and that the family whom she had relieved were probably at that moment naming her with praises and blessings. "Then why

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should I be so selfish as to repine?" thought Julia:—"perhaps no one present has such a right as I to rejoice; for how poor are the gratifications of vanity to the triumphs of benevolence!"

So like a philosopher reasoned our heroine; but she felt like a woman, and, spite of herself, an expression of vexation still prevailed over the usual sweetness of her countenance.

The races at length finished, and with them she flattered herself would finish her mortifications; but in vain. The company was expected to stay to partake of a cold collation, which was to be preceded by music and dancing; and Julia was obliged to accept the unwelcome invitation.

As the ladies were most of them very young, they were supposed not to have yet forgotten the art of dancing minuets, —an art now of so little use; and Mr. Hanmer begged sir Frederic would lead

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out his daughter to show off in a minuet. The baronet obeyed; and then offered to take out Julia for the same purpose; but she, blushing, refused to comply.

"Well, what's that for?" cried Beresford angrily, who knew that Julia was remarkable for dancing a good minuet.—"Why can't you dance when you are asked, miss Beresford?"—"Because," replied Julia in a faltering voice, "I have no gown on, and I can't dance a minuet in my—in my pelisse."

"Rot your pelisse!" exclaimed Beresford, forgetting all decency and decorum, and turned to the window to hide his angry emotions, while Julia hung her head, abashed; and the baronet led out miss Tracey, who, throwing off the cloak which she had worn before, having expected such an exhibition would take place, displayed a very fine form, set off by the most becoming gown possible.

"Charming! admirable! what a figure!

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what grace!" was murmured throughout the room. Mr. Beresford's proud heart throbbed almost to agony; while Julia, though ever ready to acknowledge the excellence of another, still felt the whole scene so vexatious to her, principally from the mortification of her father, that her only resource was again thinking on the family rescued from misery by her.

Reels were next called for; and Julia then stood up to dance; but she had not danced five minutes, when, exhausted by the various emotions which she had undergone during the last eight-and-forty hours, her head became so giddy, that she could not proceed, and was obliged to sit down.

"I believe the deuce is in the girl," muttered Mr. Beresford; and, to increase her distress, Julia overheard him.

In a short time the dancing was discontinued, and a concert begun. Miss Hanmer played a sonata, and miss Tracey sung a bravura song with great execu-

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tion. Julia was then called upon to play; but she timidly answered that she never played lessons:—

"But you sing," said miss Hanmer.

"Sometimes;—but I beg to be excused singing now."

"What! you will not sing neither?" said Mr. Beresford.

"I can't sing now, indeed, sir; I am not well enough; and I tremble so much that I have not a steady note in my voice."

"So, miss," whispered Mr. Beresford, "and this is what I get in return for having squandered so much money on your education!"

The miss Traceys were then applied to, and they sung, with great applause, a difficult Italian duo, and were complimented into the bargain on their readiness to oblige.

Poor Julia!

"You see, miss Beresford, how silly and contemptible you look," whispered

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Beresford, "while those squalling misses run away with all the admiration."

Julia's persecutions were not yet over. —"Though you are not well enough, miss Beresford, to sing a song," said Mr. Hanmer, "which requires much exertion, surely you can sing a ballad without music, which is, I am told, your fort."

"So I have heard," cried sir Frederic. "Do, miss Beresford, oblige us."

"Do," said the miss Traceys; "and we have a claim on you."

"I own it," replied Julia in a voice scarcely audible; "but you, who are such proficients in music, must know, that, to sing a simple ballad, requires more self-possession and steadiness of tone than any other kind of singing; as all the merit depends on the clearness of utterance, and the power of sustaining the notes."

"True:—but do try."

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"Indeed I cannot:" and, shrugging up their shoulders, the ladies desisted from further importunities. "I am so surprised," said one of them to the other, leaning across two or three gentlemen: "I had heard that miss Beresford was remarkably good-humoured and obliging, and she seems quite sullen and obstinate; don't you think so?"

"O dear, yes! and not obliging at all."

"No, indeed," cried miss Hanmer; "she seems to presume on her wealth, I think: what think you, gentlemen?"

But the gentlemen were not so hasty in their judgments—two of them only observed that miss Beresford was in no respect like herself that day.

"I don't think she is well," said the baronet.

"Perhaps she is in love," said miss Tracey, laughing at the shrewdness of her own observation.

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"Perhaps so," replied sir Frederic thoughtfully.

It was sir Frederic's intention to marry, and, if possible, a young woman born in the same county as himself; for he wished her to have the same local prejudices as he had, and to have the same early attachments: consequently he inquired of his steward, before he came to reside at his seat, into the character of the ladies in the neighbourhood; but the steward could, or would, talk of no one but Julia Beresford; and of her he gave so exalted a character, that sir Frederic, who only remembered her as a pleasing modest girl, was very sorry that he had not paid her more attention.

Soon after, in the gallery of an eminent painter, he saw her picture; and though he thought it flattered, he gazed on it with pleasure, and fancied that Julia, when animated, might be quite as handsome as that was. Since that time

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he had frequently thought of her, and thought of her as a woman formed to make him happy; and indeed he had gone to look at her picture the day before he came down to the country, and had it strongly in his remembrance when he saw Julia herself, pale, spiritless, and ill-dressed, in Mr. Hanmer's drawing-room.

Perhaps it would be too much to say, that he felt as much chagrined as Mr. Beresford; but certain it is, that he was sensibly disappointed, and could not help yielding to the superior attraction of the lovely and elegant miss Tracey: besides, she was the object of general attention, and

"We know of old that all contend
To win her grace whom all commend."

The concert being over, the company adjourned to an elegant entertainment set out in an open pavilion in the park, which commanded a most lovely view of the adjacent country.

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Julia seated herself near the entrance; the baronet placed himself between the two lovely sisters; and Beresford, in order to be able to vent his spleen every now and then in his daughter's ear, took a chair beside her.

The collation had every delicacy to tempt the palate, and every decoration to gratify the taste; and all, except the pensive Julia, seemed to enjoy it:—when, as she was leaning from the door to speak to a lady at the head of the table, a little boy, about ten years old, peeped into the pavilion, as if anxiously looking for some one.

The child was so clean, and so neat in his dress, that a gentleman near him patted his curly head, and asked him what he wanted.

"A lady."

"But what lady? Here is one, and a pretty one too," showing the lady next him; "will not she do?"

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"Oh no! she is not my lady," replied the boy.

At this moment Julia turned round, and the little boy, clapping his hands, exclaimed, "Oh! that's she! that's she!" Then, running out, he cried, "Mother! mother! Father! father! here she is! we have found her at last!" and before Julia, who suspected what was to follow, could leave her place, and get out of the pavilion, the poor man and woman whom she had relieved, and their now well clothed happy-looking family, appeared before the door of it.

"What does all this mean?" cried Mr. Hanmer. "Good people, whom do you want?"

"We come, sir," cried the man, "in search of that young lady," pointing to Julia; "as we could not go from the neighbourhood without coming to thank and bless her; for she saved me from going for a soldier, and my wife and

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children from a workhouse, sir, and made me and mine as comfortable as you now see us."

"Dear father! let me pass, pray do," cried Julia, trembling with emotion, and oppressed with ingenuous modesty.

"Stay where you are, girl," cried Beresford in a voice between laughing and crying.

"Well, but how came you hither?" cried Mr. Hanmer, who began to think this was a premeditated scheme of Julia's to show off before the company.

"Why, sir—shall I tell the whole story?" asked the man.

"No, no, pray go away," cried Julia, "and I'll come and speak to you."

"By no means," cried the baronet eagerly:—"the story, the story, if you please."

The man then began, and related Julia's meeting him and his family, her having relieved them, and then running

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away to avoid their thanks, and to prevent her being followed, as it seemed, and being known.—That, resolved not to rest till they had learnt the name of their benefactress, they had described her person and her dress: "but, bless your honour," interrupted the woman, "when we said what she had done for us, we had not to ask any more, for every one said it could be nobody but miss Julia Beresford!"

Here Julia hid her face on her father's shoulder, and the company said not a word. The young ladies appeared conscience-struck; for it seemed that none in the neighbourhood (and they were of it) could do a kind action but miss Julia Beresford.

"Well, my good man, go on," cried Beresford gently.

"Well, sir; yesterday I heard that if I went to live at a market-town four miles off, I could get more work to do than I

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have in my own village, and employ for my little boy too; so we resolved to go and try our luck there: but we could not be easy to go away, without coming to thank and bless that good young lady; so, hearing at her house that she was come hither, we made bold to follow her; your servants told us where to find her: —ah! bless her!—thanks to her, I can afford to hire a cart for my poor sick wife and family!"

"Ah! miss, miss," cried the little boy, pulling Julia by the arm, "only think, we shall ride in a cart, with a tall horse; and brother and I have got new shoes—only look!"

But miss was crying, and did not like to look: however, she made an effort, and looked up, but was forced to turn away her head again, overset by a "God bless you!" heartily pronounced by the poor woman, and echoed by the man.

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"This is quite a scene, I protest," cried miss Tracey.

"But one in which we should all have been proud to have been actors, I trust," answered the baronet. "What say you, gentlemen and ladies?" continued he, coming forward: "though we cannot equal miss Beresford's kindness, since she sought out poverty, and it comes to us, what say you? shall we make a purse for these good people, that they may not think there is only one kind being in the neighbourhood?"

"Agreed!" cried every one; and, as sir Frederic held the *hat*, the subscription from the ladies was a liberal one; but Mr. Beresford gave *five guineas*: then Mr. Hanmer desired the overjoyed family to go to his house to get some refreshment, and the company reseated themselves.

But Mr. Beresford having quitted his

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seat, in order to wipe his eyes unseen at the door, the baronet had taken the vacant place by Julia.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," cried Beresford, blowing his nose, "you shall see a new sight,—a parent asking pardon of his child. Julia, my dear, I know I behaved very ill;—I know I was very cross to you,—very savage;—I know I was.—You are a good girl,—and always were, and ever will be, the pride of my life;—so let's kiss and be friends:"—and Julia, throwing herself into her father's arms, declared she should now be herself again!

"What! more scenes!" cried Mr. Hanmer. "What, are you sentimental too, Beresford?—Who should have thought it!"

"Why, *I'll* tell a story now," replied he:—"That girl vexed and mortified me confoundedly,—that she did.—I wished her to be smart, to do honour to you and

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your daughter to-day;—so I sent her twelve guineas to buy a very handsome velvet pelisse, which she took a fancy to, but which I thought too dear.—But instead of that,—here she comes in this old fright, and a fine dowdy figure she looks:—and when I reproached her, she said she had given the money away; and so I suppose it was that very money which she gave to these poor people.—Heh! was it not so, Julia?"

"It was," replied Julia; "and I dared not then be so extravagant as to get the pelisse too."

"So, Hanmer," continued Beresford, "you may sneer at me for being *sentimental*, if you please; but I am now prouder of my girl in her shabby cloak here, than if she were dressed out in silks and satins."

"And so you ought to be," cried sir Frederic. "And miss Beresford has converted this garment," lifting up the

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end of the pelisse, "into a robe of honour:"—so saying, he gallantly pressed it to his lips. "Come, I will give you a toast," continued he:—"Here is the health of the woman who was capable of sacrificing the gratification of her personal vanity to the claims of benevolence!"

The ladies put up their pretty lips, but drank the toast, and Beresford went to the door to wipe his eyes again; while Julia could not help owning to herself, that if she had had her moments of mortification, they were richly paid.

The collation was now resumed, and Julia partook of it with pleasure; her heart was at ease, her cheek recovered its bloom, and her eyes their lustre. Again the miss Traceys sung, and with increased brilliancy of execution.—"It was wonderful! they sung like professors," every one said; and then again was Julia requested to sing.

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"I can sing *now*," replied she; "and I never refuse when I *can* do so. Now I have found my father's favour, I shall find my voice too;" and then, without any more preamble, she sung a plaintive and simple ballad, in a manner the most touching and unadorned.

No one applauded while she sung, for all seemed afraid to lose any particle of tones so sweet and so pathetic; but when she had ended, every one, except sir Frederic, loudly commended her, and he was silent; but Julia saw that his eyes glistened, and she heard him sigh, and she was very glad that he said nothing.

Again the sisters sung, and Julia too, and then the party broke up; but Mrs. Tracey invited the same party to meet at her house in the evening, to a ball and supper, and they all agreed to wait on her.

As they returned to the house, sir Frederic gave his arm to Julia, and miss Tracey walked before them.

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"That is a very fine, showy, elegant girl," observed sir Frederic.

"She is indeed, and very handsome," replied Julia; "and her singing is really wonderful."

"Just so," replied sir Frederic;—"it is wonderful, but not pleasing. Her singing is like herself,—she is a bravura song,—showy and brilliant, but not *touching*—not interesting."—Julia smiled at the illustration; and the baronet continued:—"Will you be angry at my presumption, miss Beresford, if I venture to add that you too resemble your singing? If miss Tracey be a bravura song, you are a ballad,—not showy, not brilliant, but touching, interesting, and—"

"O! pray say no more," cried Julia, blushing, and hastening to join the company,—but it was a blush of pleasure; and as she rode home she amused herself with analysing all the properties of the

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ballad, and she was very well contented with the analysis.

That evening Julia, all herself again, and dressed with exquisite and becoming taste, danced, smiled, talked, and was universally admired. But was she *particularly* so? Did the man of her heart follow her with delighted attention?

"Julia," said her happy father, as they went home at night, "you will have the velvet pelisse and sir Frederic too, I expect."

Nor was he mistaken. The pelisse was hers the next day, and the baronet some months after. But Julia to this hour preserves with the utmost care the faded pelisse, which sir Frederic had pronounced to be "a robe of honour."

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THE DEATH-BED.

"Ah! ce n'est point légèrement qu'on a donné tant d'importance à la fidélité des femmes! Le bien, le mal de la société, sont attachés à leur conduite; le paradis ou l'enfer des familles dépend à tout jamais de l'opinion qu'elles ont donné d'elles." LA-MÈRE COUPABLE, p. 32.

BELMOUR, a gentleman residing in Dublin, was a man of small fortune, but of large expectations. He was heir to a distant and avaricious relation, who, not being able to bear the sight of the man who was to enjoy after his death that precious wealth which he had not the spirit to enjoy himself, forbade him his presence, and coldly allowed the noble-minded representative of an antient family to

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struggle with all the difficulties of a limited income.

These difficulties Belmour was imprudent enough to increase, by marrying a young woman who had no dower but her beauty.—But, like Jaffier, "he was in love, and pleased with ruin;" or rather, his lovely wife made so many promises of being attentive to the strictest rules of œconomy, that Belmour thought ruin could not reach them, and believed that Mrs. Belmour, as well as himself, had not a wish beyond the joys of home, and the little circle of enlightened friends to whom he was proud to introduce her. During the first year of their marriage, Mrs. Belmour's wishes were, perhaps, as confined as his own; nor did she make any prudent resolutions but what it was her intention to keep.—But vanity was her ruling passion, and, though curbed by love, it was by no means subdued.—Though she was so beautiful in face, so

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perfect in form that she needed not the usual ornaments of her sex, she had a most inordinate passion for dress, which, though for a time controlled, led her insensibly into expenses unwarranted by her own original situation in life, or her husband's confined circumstances; and debt succeeded to debt, embarrassment to embarrassment, till, just as the birth of a daughter had increased the expenses of their little household, when Belmour was endeavouring to curtail his own personal expenditure, in order to provide for the increasing wants of a family, demands, the consequences of his wife's extravagance, came unexpectedly upon him, and the new-blown joys of the father were blighted by the angry sorrows of the husband.

But his resentment, though just, could not continue long against the tears and seeming penitence of his adored Henrietta; she made so many vows of amend-

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ment, and, while declaring that she felt herself unworthy of his love, she threw into her fine eyes so much touching tenderness, in order to excite it to the utmost, that Belmour pronounced her pardon in the most unequivocal manner; and, putting her child in her arms, contented himself with desiring her to remember that, by her conduct as a mother, she could amply make him amends for the errors which she had committed as a wife.

For some months all went on well again; but, as soon as Mrs. Belmour ceased to be a nurse, the wish of entering into company returned, and with it, the desire of various and expensive dress. Insensibly too, the circle of their acquaintance became enlarged; and the fame of Mrs. Belmour's beauty being spread abroad, she became the fashionable subject of conversation in Dublin; and Mr. Belmour was told it was a matter of surprise and regret at the Castle that his

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beautiful wife was not allowed to grace the circles there.

No man, not even the wisest man perhaps, ever had a beautiful wife, without taking pride in seeing universal homage paid to her charms; and when Mrs. Belmour eagerly entreated her husband to let her be presented, he yielded to the united suggestions of pride and tenderness, and Mrs. Belmour was introduced into the court circle. The consequence was, that, in order to vie in dress with her new acquaintance, she again contracted debts, which, remembering the awfulness of her husband's resentment on her first transgressions in this manner, she studiously endeavoured to keep from his knowledge.

At length, however, her chief creditor became clamorous, and his bill was delivered with a threat that he would not leave the house till he was paid, while a rich and profligate young man of fashion,

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who was Mrs. Belmour's constant attendant, was paying his devoirs to her.

Mrs. Belmour had not yet learned to conceal her feelings; and, overcome almost to fainting at the idea of her husband's being informed of a debt so enormous, colonel Morrison soon drew from her a confession of the nature of her embarrassment; and, telling her that he would leave her for a few minutes to give her an opportunity of recovering herself, he suddenly left the room.

In a few moments after, she heard the door of the hall closed; and colonel Morrison, returning, begged her to forgive the liberty which he had taken, and then informed her that he had discharged the debt which distressed her, himself.

Confused, degraded, yet gratified and relieved, Mrs. Belmour wept her thanks, but protested that she should insist on the colonel's receiving back the sum which he had so kindly advanced, by instal-

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ments; and instantly she tendered him a small sum, which he, from policy, accepted: and by this measure, being somewhat reconciled to the means by which she had been assisted, Mrs. Belmour resumed her gaiety, and colonel Morrison flattered himself that the designs which he had formed against the honour of this deluded woman, were likely to succeed.

Soon after, he, by his own contrivance, found himself again present when Mrs. Belmour was beset by embarrassments of a similar nature; and again was his assistance tendered and accepted.

The next step was to prevail on her to accept presents, which Belmour's narrow fortune forbade him to make; though often did her affectionate husband lament his inability to gratify her taste, and assure her that, as soon as he became possessed of the fortune in store for them, she should not have a wish ungratified, which money could indulge.—But colo-

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lonel Morrison was already in possession of his fortune, and that fortune was at his command: and, while he one day paid her debts, another day presented her with expensive ornaments, some of which she dared not wear except when she went out without her husband, as he did not know they were in her possession, her reputation became the victim of his attentions, and her virtue did not long survive it, especially as she learned to consider Belmour with aversion, as soon as she dreaded to behold in him a justly irritated judge.

But, guilty as Mrs. Belmour was now become, she was not so lost to every honourable feeling as to bear to live under the roof of her injured husband, while carrying on a criminal intrigue with another man. On the contrary, she did not rest till colonel Morrison had prepared every thing for an elopement; and taking advantage of the very first opportunity that occurred, she fled to infamy

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and her seducer, and set off with him for the continent.

Mr. Belmour was gone into the country for a few days; and while there, the very day indeed of his wife's elopement, he received an express to let him know that his relation was dead, and that he was at length possessor of the long-expected fortune.

"Now, then," cried Mr. Belmour, hastening to town as fast as four horses could carry him, tears of tenderness filling his eyes as he spoke, "now, then, shall I see the wife of my heart gratified in all her wishes, and able to indulge the liberality of her nature! Oh, Henrietta! never again will your extravagance provoke a reproach from my prudence, but we shall be uninterruptedly happy; so happy!"—here his voice failed him, and he sunk into the silence of full contentment.

"Where is your mistress? is she at

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home?" cried Mr. Belmour, as the chaise stopped at his door—but without waiting for an answer he ran up into the drawing-room; whither his servant slowly followed him.

"She is not here," he exclaimed, and proceeded to her dressing-room.—"Is your mistress out?" cried he, turning round to his servant, who held a letter in his hand.

"My—my mistress, sir," cried the servant, wiping his eyes, "went away, that is, went out yesterday, and left this letter for you."

Mr. Belmour seized the letter, and, tearing it open with frantic eagerness, only read enough of it to inform him of his misery, before he fell senseless on the ground; and it was some time before he recovered to wretchedness and recollection.

"But where is my child? is she spared to me?" cried the afflicted husband, starting from the supporting arms of his at-

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tendants,—and in a moment he was by the bedside of his forsaken Laura.

"Laura! my poor forsaken babe!" cried Belmour, bursting into an agony of tears as he threw himself by the side of the sleeping child—At this moment she awoke; and, uneasy as many children are on awaking from sleep, uttered a loud and impatient cry, which pierced her father to the soul.

"O God!" exclaimed he, striking his forehead, "poor babe! thou hast no longer a mother to attend thy cries."

But her smiles distressed him as much; and when, soothed by his caresses, the little girl put up her pretty mouth to kiss him, and, smiling through her tears, lisped out, "Dear papa, and dear mamma!"

"Oh, Henrietta!" he cried, "how couldst thou have the heart to forsake her?"

What a slave of criminal selfishness indeed must that mother be, who, for a lover, can forsake her offspring! Let not

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such a woman presume, in the pride of her heart, to look down with aversion on the poor desperate female who robs of existence the secret pledge of her frailty:—murderess though she be, she is not more unnatural than the cold-hearted egotist, who can forsake her children for the arms of a seducer, and consent to brand her guiltless child with the dangerous distinction of being the daughter of an adulteress.

I will no longer dwell on the distress of Mr. Belmour, nor on the alternate schemes of revenge, contempt, active resentment, and forbearance, which by turns agitated his mind; suffice, that he resolved not to seek redress in a court of justice, and thereby enable himself or his guilty wife to marry again, as he wished not to be tempted to form a second connection;—from a firm conviction, that it was his duty to devote himself entirely to the instruction of his deserted Laura, in order to

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supply to her the care of the parent whom she had lost; and to imprint deeply on her mind those principles of religion and virtue, to the want of which he attributed the fall of her unhappy mother.

Mrs. Belmour meanwhile, soon abandoned by the man for whom she had left her husband and her child, had no resource but in a continuance of a course of vice; and when her daughter was on the eve of being introduced into the world, the too late repentant mother, a prey to remorse and sickness, was pining away life in a sort of premature decay; while, as her weakness increased, the images of the husband and the child whom she had abandoned grew stronger and stronger, and she was tormented with the cravings of those feelings of returning affection, which she could never never hope to have gratified.

Laura Belmour was then seventeen, and her anxious father was about to pre-

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sent her to the world, with solicitude struggling with parental pride; and his hopes of her welfare were continually blasted by the suggestions of fear, and the whispers of experience.

Mr. Belmour, though a virtuous man, was a man of the world, and but too well acquainted with the opinions and sentiments of men of the world. Hence, he feared that the guilt of her mother might injure his innocent and unoffending daughter, as she might be supposed likely to inherit her mother's vices;—as if education were not every thing in the formation of character, and blood nothing!

Laura, educated by a parent who watched over her actions, her studies, and acquaintance, with unremitting attention, that her mind might not be sullied by any possible circumstance; ignorant too as Mr. Belmour had wisely suffered her to remain of the guilt and existence of her unhappy mother, could not fail to be as

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pure, as though her mother had been the pride of her sex: but Mr. Belmour knew, that, in the eyes of many persons, she would be the victim of her parent's infamy; and so terrified was he lest this circumstance should prevent her from settling in life, that, though no friend to a young woman's marrying early, he was eager to promote the most distant prospect of disposing of Laura in marriage.

As Laura was young, beautiful, and highly accomplished, she was no sooner introduced than she was surrounded by admirers, one of whom soon recommended himself both to her and her father; when, what Mr. Belmour's fears had prognosticated took place. The young gentleman's father, on hearing that his son appeared greatly charmed by the daughter of the frail Mrs. Belmour, forbade him to form a connection which his prudence could never approve; and the youth himself, being as prudent as his father, lef

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Dublin, in order to avoid the danger of forming so improper an attachment.

Unfortunately Mr. Belmour did not long remain ignorant of the cause of this cessation of an acquaintance which had filled his heart with hopes of happiness for his daughter. Every one has some kind friend, who, on pretence of expressing his or her sorrow for your misfortune, takes care to inform you of some disaster, which, but for their officiousness, you would never have known, and which consequently to you would never have existed; and this was the case with Mr. Belmour. A *soi-disant* friend, lamenting very pathetically the illiberality of mankind, humanely plunged a dagger in the heart of Belmour, by letting him know that the infamy of his wife had deprived his daughter of a most excellent husband.

The intelligence, for a time, made Dublin odious to him; and he resolved to

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change the scene, and take Laura to the world of London,—where a new and unlooked-for instance of the profligacy of a man of the world, and of the fatal consequences of his wife's frailty, soon presented itself.

From amongst the crowd who surrounded her, Laura's inexperienced heart soon singled out sir Edward Tyrconnel, a young baronet, who to every grace of person added every charm of manner; and who, by unremitting attention, convinced her that he entertained for her a passion at once ardent and respectful. Nor was Mr. Belmour less charmed with sir Edward than his daughter; when, just as he had declared his love to Laura, a friend of Belmour's called on him, and informed him that he knew, from indisputable authority, that sir Edward had a wife alive, an elderly woman, whom he had married for her fortune, and who, from the circumstance of her

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having been dying for years, had enabled her profligate husband to seduce more than one young woman, by a promise of marrying her as soon as his wife died.

To this information Belmour listened in a paroxysm of rage; nor was it otherwise than strictly true. True also was it, that sir Edward, who scrupled nothing in order to gratify his passions whenever the object of his wishes was unprotected and friendless, would have shrunk back appalled from the hopeless task of seducing the beautiful heiress of the rich Mr. Belmour, had not he built his hopes of success on the known frailty of her unhappy mother. Mr. Belmour too suspected that he did so; and driven to phrensy by the idea, he wrote a challenge to sir Edward, accusing him of dishonourable designs towards Laura, and insisting on immediate satisfaction.

Piqued and disappointed, for sir Edward

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thought his being married was unknown in England, he accepted the challenge, but refused to fire first. Mr. Belmour fired, and missed him: sir Edward then discharged his pistol in the air, declaring that he would not lift his arm against the father of the woman whom he adored; and protesting that his only wish was, as the death of his wife was expected every day, to gain an interest in Laura's heart sufficient to make other suitors unsuccessful, till he was at liberty to offer her his hand and fortune.

Mr. Belmour accepted this apology, but insisted that he should break off all intercourse with Laura till he was at liberty to address her; and then, as friends, they parted.

But sir Edward had a *powerful* advocate in Laura's heart: she saw no dishonour to himself, no danger to her, in his conduct; and though she refused to meet

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him, or hear from him clandestinely, a mutual friend conveyed messages backwards and forwards from the lovers; and Laura, looking forward with certainty to being the wife of sir Edward, treasured up her affection to him in her bosom, as an inclination which a very short time would entirely sanction; and Mr. Belmour had the mortification of seeing that Laura, though devoid of any criminal propensity, had yet incurred the sin of eagerly expecting the death of another,—while he was equally aware that sir Edward still in a manner continued his addresses: and being sure of the profligacy of the baronet, he could not believe that his intentions were really honourable.

One evening Belmour had accompanied Laura to Covent-garden theatre, and, preceded by their servant, was conducting her along the piazzas to the carriage, which was stationed in King-street, when a wo-

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man of the town, whose meagre frame was ill concealed by the thin and dirty covering which she wore, and whose pale and haggard looks not even art could disguise, in feeble accents accosted Mr. Belmour, as he disengaged his arm from Laura and stepped forward to see where the carriage stood, and asked charity of him, declaring that she had not tasted food all day; and, as she said this, she laid her cold hand on his arm, to keep herself from falling.

Mr. Belmour started, and threw off the trembling arm that leaned on him for support,—for the voice had thrilled to his soul;—and turning round as he did so, he beheld in the tottering being by his side, his once beautiful and beloved Henrietta.

The recognition was mutual; and, with a shriek of agony, the wretched victim of seduction sunk at his feet; and in a tone broken, and almost extinct, ex-

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claimed,—"Mercy! pardon! and I shall die in peace."

The appeal was not lost on Mr. Belmour; and he had raised the wretched being in his arms, when he beheld Laura gazing on them, and full of speechless wonder. At that moment he perceived a gentleman whom he knew; and begging that he would, for God's sake, see his daughter safe to her carriage, he procured admission into a private room at a coffee-house under the piazzas; and thither, assisted by his servant, who had also recognised his former mistress, he conveyed the senseless Henrietta.

Alas! while performing the offices of christian duty to his guilty wife, little did Mr. Belmour think that he had exposed to the utmost danger his as yet innocent child. The gentleman to whose care he had consigned her, in order to spare her the dreadful scene which awaited him,

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was the friend and confidant of sir Edward; who, as soon as Mr. Belmour was out of sight, accosted the trembling and amazed Laura, and helped to support her along the piazzas; and then, on pretence of procuring her something to compose her spirits, prevailed on her to enter a back room in an adjoining fruit-shop; while Laura, but too happy to find herself again with the man of her heart, forgot every thing in the kind and soothing attentions of sir Edward; and his friend having left them alone, she had been prevailed on to listen, without indignation, to his proposal, that she should elope with him, and live under the protection of a female relation of his, where he might see her every day till his wife's death, which was hourly expected, should take place.

But while Laura is madly listening to the voice of the seducer, let us return to her unhappy parents.

Belmour had laid his wretched charge

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on a bed; and while others were administering to her revival, he was gazing with tearless eyes and in unutterable woe on the dreadful object before him; and enumerating to himself, with a sort of desperate curiosity, the various traces which disease and want had left in her once exquisite form.

At length she revived, and, recognising her husband, gave a deep groan, and hid her face with her hands.

"For God's sake, leave us together!" cried Belmour hoarse with emotion. He was obeyed; and Henrietta found herself alone with the husband whom she had so cruelly abandoned.

"Oh, mercy! pardon!" she again exclaimed, and tried to sink upon her knees: but Belmour prevented her; and seating her on the bed, he sat beside her, and gazed on her with compassionate and mournful earnestness, while her eye sunk abashed from his gaze.

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"Oh, Henrietta!" cried he at length, bursting into tears,—"where are your lovers now? Who will now clasp this faded form to their bosom? But I, the husband whom you forsook, would have loved you even in sickness, and clasped you as fondly to me as in the days of your brightest bloom. Nay, even now, had ought *else* changed you thus, I would have watched over you, and pressed you to my heart so tenderly! O cruel, cruel woman! O thou, whom neither absence, injuries, nor vice, have been able to tear from my heart,—say—"

Here he paused, for Henrietta had fallen back on the bed, and he thought that she was gone for ever; and, in a transport of penitence for his reproaches, he threw himself on his knees by her, and conjured her to recover, and hear him pronounce her pardon, promising, at the same time, that he would reproach her

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no more. He did yet further, he laid her head on his bosom.

She revived;—she saw where her head rested, and a faint smile illumined her countenance; but in a moment horror supplied the place of satisfaction, and, shuddering, she withdrew herself from the support of which she knew herself unworthy. Nor did Belmour offer to retain her;—with his fear for her life his tenderness had vanished: but when Henrietta again implored his forgiveness, he forgot every thing but her wretchedness and her situation, and promised, what she dared not ask, that she should breathe her last in his arms. As he said this, her hand grasped his, and he returned the almost convulsive pressure.

At this moment Henrietta took courage to ask whether she had a *daughter*.—With scarcely audible voice he replied—"Yes, —an angel, and lovely as—as her mother—"

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"Thank God!" she exclaimed.—"And, oh! may she prove a blessing to you, and make you amends by her virtues for my guilt!—But where is she?"

"Ha! well remembered," cried Belmour, ringing the bell hastily, and the servant appeared.

"Go instantly," cried he, "and see whether miss Belmour is got safe home."

"I will, sir," replied the man;—"but I doubt—"

"Doubt what?"

"Why, sir, you know, on seeing that lady, you begged Mr. Dalton to see her safe to her carriage."

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, sir, you forgot, surely, that Mr. Dalton is sir Edward Tyrconnel's friend; and you did not see, probably, that sir Edward was behind, as if watching to speak to my young lady."

In a moment the danger to which his child was exposed rushed on the mind of

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his unhappy father; and the wretched Henrietta appeared to him as doomed to be, in every way, the enemy of her devoted daughter:—till, driven to phrensy by this new calamity, he turned round to her, and exclaimed—"Wretch! this also is *thy* deed!—Yes, thou hast been the means of plunging thy forsaken child in infamy like thy own!"

Here, uttering a dreadful scream, the wretched woman exclaimed,—"O do not curse me!—the agonies of death are on me."—But she spoke in vain. Belmour heard her not; he heeded not even his dying Henrietta, but rushed to the door, determined to go in pursuit of his daughter.

We left Laura listening with fond credulity to the proposals of her lover, and willing to believe that even her father would not greatly resent her acceding to a plan which, in her eyes, had not even the resemblance of culpability; and she had almost consented to put herself in

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the power of a man, who, though she knew it not, meant nothing but her ruin, and deemed her an easy victim: not but that she frequently interrupted sir Edward with exclamations of wonder, who that poor wretched woman could be who so much interested her father; and sir Edward had as constantly attributed Belmour's conduct to humanity, made more active by some previous knowledge of its object; and then resuming his tender entreaties and attentions, he succeeded in putting an end to inquiries which he did not choose to answer, though well aware who was the object of Mr. Belmour's attentions.

A chaise, procured by sir Edward's friend, was ready; and Laura was only faintly resisting the entreaties of her lover to allow him to lead her to it, when the door of the room in which they were was suddenly opened, and a young man, in the habit of a clergyman, rushed into the room.

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This gentleman, whose name was Lionel Dormer, though not authorised by his rank or fortune to address the daughter of Mr. Belmour, had vainly endeavoured to behold Laura without emotion; but, as he was without hope or presumption, he contented himself with gazing on her unobserved, as he thought, at a distance; though he might have seen, by the conscious blush which overspread Laura's cheek whenever he entered the room where she was, that she had observed the earnestness of his gaze, and attributed it to a cause flattering to her vanity, if not to her feelings.

Dormer had been the unobserved spectator of Mr. Belmour's rencontre with his unhappy wife, whose person was known to him; and was just stepping forward to offer his services to take miss Belmour away from a scene so dreadful to her feelings, should she surmise the truth, when he saw her father consign her to the care

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of sir Edward Tyrconnel's friend; and saw that gentleman, whose character and whose pretensions to Laura were well known to him, come forward, and prevail on his destined victim to enter the shop nearest to them.

His first impulse was to follow Mr. Belmour; but he had lost sight of him: besides, he had only suspicions of his daughter's danger to impart to him; and he could not bear to call Mr. Belmour away from the pious, though dreadful, task of speaking peace and forgiveness to the soul of a trembling culprit, perhaps on the verge of eternity. He therefore resolved to watch the lovers himself, and to regulate his actions according to theirs. He did so; and as if virtuous love had resolved, for once, to triumph over illicit passion, a scheme occurred to him to save Laura from dishonour, just as by agreeing to her lover's plan she had unconsciously exposed herself to it.

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"No, indeed, I cannot leave my father; I cannot be so disobedient; for pity's sake let me go home this moment," cried Laura, faintly trying to disengage herself from sir Edward's encircling arm.

At this moment Dormer entered the room, and begged miss Belmour would allow him to conduct her to her father.

"'Sdeath, sir! who are you?" cried sir Edward. "Do you know him, miss Belmour?"

"I only know," replied Laura, "the gentleman's name and person; but my father has sent him, and—"

"Your father sent a stranger for you! No, this is some fortune-hunter, who wants to get you in his power; but I will frustrate his design: therefore give me your hand." But Laura shrunk back.

"Sir Edward," replied Dormer, "one of us has designs against this lady, I know; but—"

"Insolent villain!" replied the ba-

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ronet. "Away with you this moment, or—"

"Sir," replied the dignified young man, "when I know that I am engaged in a *good* cause, in the rescue of innocence, I am not capable of being awed by the threats of any one." Here he paused, from violent emotion; for Laura, terrified and abashed, had thrown herself for support on the shoulder of her lover; who, thinking his victory was now certain, haughtily demanded whether Dormer dared to assert that Mr. Belmour had sent him for his daughter.

"No; he did not send me," was the answer.

"There, you see!" exclaimed the baronet triumphantly; and Laura coldly told Dormer she had no occasion for his services.

"Poor, unconscious victim!" cried Dormer, elevating his voice; "I vow that I will not leave you till I see you under

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your father's protection: nay, I will do yet more to preserve you; for I will lead you to him, where he is now kneeling in silent horror by the bed of your dying and guilty mother."

"Mother! did you say?" said Laura, screaming with agony, and springing forward towards him as she spoke.

"Barbarian!" cried sir Edward, turning pale, and trying to hide his confusion under humanity;—"how can you have the brutality to tell her this horrid truth!"

"Do *you* talk of humanity," replied Dormer, "whose aim is to plunge her innocence in infamy like her mother's?"

"Sir, sir," again cried Laura, hanging on his arm,—"for God's sake, for mercy's sake, what did you say of my mother? Have I a mother, sir?"

"Miss Belmour," solemnly replied Dormer, "that poor, wretched creature, whom you saw supported in the arms of

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your agitated father, was your mother; —was once lovely and innocent as you, till she listened to the voice of the seducer. Oh, miss Belmour! will *you* too listen to it?—will you too commit adultery, and receive the addresses of a married man?"

"Never! never!" cried the agitated girl. "Oh, sir, lead me this moment to my father, and he will bless you for—" She could say no more; but, throwing herself into Dormer's arms, she fainted on his bosom; and in that state, spite of the resistance of sir Edward, who fiercely threatened revenge, he bore her to the door; and having soon learnt whither the gentleman had conveyed the dying woman, in a few moments Laura was under the same roof with her father; and Dormer, as soon as she revived, hastened in search of Mr. Belmour.

He reached the apartment just as Bel-

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mour, muttering curses on his wife, was hastening in pursuit of his child.

"Do you bring me news of my daughter?" cried Belmour wildly.

"I do; she is safe, and in the next room," answered Dormer.

Belmour turned from him, and burst into a flood of tears.

"What is that? What did you tell him?" cried Henrietta. "O do not say his child is dishonoured, lest he should again curse me! O wretched woman! must I then die with the consciousness that I have caused the guilt of my child?"

"No," cried Dormer, eagerly approaching her, "Heaven spares you that torment. I come to speak peace and comfort to you. Your daughter is under this roof, in all her native innocence." Henrietta at these words pressed his hand to her clammy lips. "Nay," and his voice faltered as he spoke, "*you* have

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been the means, perhaps, of saving your daughter from perdition."

Henrietta gasping for breath fixed her eyes wildly on him, and Belmour eagerly approached him.

"Yes, she would probably have been forced to follow her abandoned lover; when, on being informed that the unhappy object whom she had seen her father supporting was her mother, once lovely and innocent as herself, struck by the warning example, she threw herself into my arms, and allowed me to conduct her hither."

"My God! my gracious God! I thank thee!" cried Henrietta: "I have then saved, and not destroyed my child; and thou, Belmour, wilt now bless, not curse me."

Belmour could not speak, but he pressed the poor penitent in his arms.

"Good young man! see what you have

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done! He has embraced me! I owe this blessing to you," cried Henrietta with effort: then laying her cheek on the bosom of Belmour, her lips moved as if in prayer; and she expired without a groan.

After a pause of some minutes, Belmour said, "Laura must be brought into this apartment: alas! she needs the warning of a scene like this."

"Oh no! for pity's sake, spare her the trial!" exclaimed Dormer, no longer able to bear to wound Laura's feelings, when the purpose for which he wounded them was fully answered.

But the offended and deeply irritated father felt differently; and entering the room where Laura was, he took her trembling hand in silence, and led her up to the corpse of her mother.

"This was your mother, Laura," said Mr. Belmour, "once the pride, then the bane of my life! Tremble, deluded girl,

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lest thou be like her, and lest the curses of thy father succeed to his blessings!—Oh, Laura! but for that benevolent stranger, what, what perhaps, wouldst thou have been to-morrow!"

The lesson, a dreadful one indeed, sunk deep into her heart; and, kneeling by her mother's corpse, she solemnly vowed to endeavour to look on her abandoned lover from that moment with nothing but contempt and aversion; and, hard as the struggle was, she was at length successful in her efforts.

But did Dormer's virtues, and humble, hopeless passion obtain no recompense? —Yes:—Mr. Belmour, too rich to require fortune in a son-in-law, finding that Dormer possessed such virtues and such talents as made him an ornament to his sacred profession, bestowed on him, as a wife, with her entire consent and approbation, the woman whom he had rescued

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from danger, if not from guilt; and Laura, never forgetting the warning example of her mother, was at once the pride of her father, and the happiness of her husband.

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THE

FASHIONABLE WIFE,

AND

UNFASHIONABLE HUSBAND.

LOUISA HOWARD was the only child of lord N——; and neither trouble, expense, nor the most watchful attention had been spared, to make her as richly gifted in virtues and accomplishments, as she already was in wealth and personal charms.

But the vigilant eye of a mother had not watched over her youth: and where is the eye that can equal a mother's in vigilance? Lady N—— died when her child was only seven years old; and though lord N—— fulfilled, with the most scrupulous exactness, the directions

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left by his amiable wife for the education of Louisa, it was not in his nature or power, nor is it, perhaps, possible for any man, to take cognizance of those apparently slight, but really important, deviations from the strict path of propriety and rectitude, which the observation of a mother easily detects, and can frequently prevent.

For instance:—tendencies to wastefulness; to unnecessary expense; to want of order:—to want of punctuality in the payment of old debts, and to imprudent haste in contracting new ones:—these, and many other faults of the same kind, being most visible in the interior of a young woman's domestic establishment, are likely to escape a father's notice in their progress, and to remain unknown, till they burst upon him matured into lasting and pernicious habits.

This was the case with Louisa Howard. Accustomed to every indulgence which

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opulence could bestow, and believing that she was born to have every wish gratified as soon as formed, no considerations of œconomy could withhold her from indulging every benevolent or selfish wish of her heart: nay, an artful and dependent female relation who lived in the family, and to whom her extravagance was serviceable, was continually assuring her, that œconomy in her would be a *vice*:—hence, she contracted habits of spending money in such profusion, both on her own wants and those of others, that she found herself, at the early age of eighteen, involved in debt to an amount so considerable, that, lavish as her father was in supplying her wants, and indulgent to her errors, she shrunk back affrighted from the task of disclosing her situation to him, and was reduced to the degrading necessity of putting off with fair promises the creditors who waited on her for something more substantial;

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while, though the mischievous relation who had helped to mislead her was at this time removed from her by death, the habit, alas! was not removed with the promoter of it: and though convinced of the error of her ways,—to forsake them, and tread again in the right path, was a task infinitely beyond her ability and resolution to execute.

Thus, though possessed of superior beauty, talents, and accomplishments, and of a sweetness of temper which had never known a moment's cloud, Louisa knew that she had frailties which contained the germs of incalculable mischief; and while she felt herself in many respects culpable as a daughter, she also knew that she was still more unfitted to act with propriety the part of a wife.—Yet, to be a wife, and the wife of one of the most respectable of men, soon became the dear and secret object of her ambition.

Louisa was in the habit of reading the

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debates in the newspapers to lord N——; and at a time when the state of politics was such, as to involve in its consequences even the existence, perhaps, of civilized society; and to cause every woman, as well as man, of sensibility and strong affections, to sorrow with gloomy anticipation over those sufferings in a neighbouring kingdom, which might one day or other be but too prevalent in our own:—at this period of alarm and interest, lord Henry Algernon distinguished himself in the lower house by all the graces of eloquence, and the force of argument; and Louisa, who, like most young men and women of quick talents, was a great enthusiast, and fond of having an idol to worship, fancied that this modern patriot and orator realised her ideas of those who lived in the pages of history; and, unconsciously to herself, her reason and her imagination united to prepare her young heart to imbibe a passion for a

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man whom she had never seen, and who, from his age and character, was not likely to be desirous of obtaining the heart which she was ready to bestow.

Nor was it long before she began to suspect that lord Henry engrossed more of her thoughts than delicacy and prudence warranted; and of this she was convinced when she saw him by accident during a short stay in London.—"There! that's lord Henry Algernon," said a lady to her, whom she was accompanying one morning to her milliner's.

Louisa eagerly followed the direction of her friend's eyes, and saw those of lord Henry fixed upon her with a look of complacency as he passed: she blushed, and withdrew hers immediately; but she turned and looked at him through the little back window of the coach, till he was out of sight.

"So—that is lord Henry Algernon!" said Louisa, sighing when she saw him no longer.

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"Yes," replied her friend: "he is very plain; is he not?"

"Plain! with those eyes!" returned Louisa eagerly: "Impossible!" and, leaning back in the carriage, she fell into no unpleasing reverie.

Certain it is, that lord Henry's speeches lost nothing of their merit in her opinion, from the view which she had had of his person; and she could not help owning to herself, that she thought too much of a man who was never likely to think of her at all:—but perhaps she never gave so great a proof of the strength of her judgment, as in thinking with such decided preference of a man like him.

Lord Henry Algernon was not such a man as girls of eighteen commonly admire or behold with pleasure. He was considerably more than thirty; fonder of books than of society; and his person was more remarkable for its manliness than its grace: nor could his features boast of

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much regularity; his complexion was pale, and his skin slightly injured by the small-pox; but the striking lustre and expression of his dark eyes, made ample amends for the irregularity of his other features; and, aided by a smile, which though rare was irresistible, gave him pretensions to as much reputation for personal beauty, as a wise man need wish to possess, or a rational woman desire in the man of her choice.

Such were his external pretensions to the admiration of our sex; and in eloquence, virtue, and talents he was so avowedly distinguished, that awe and reverence seemed likely in women to forbid the existence towards him of any softer feeling: perhaps, too, the reserve and almost cold dignity of his manner might, by making him not likely to inspire love, occasion him to be less apt to feel it; but certain it is, that he had never known what a *serious* passion was, when he

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was first introduced to our conscious and blushing heroine at the Castle, as her father's seat was called.

Lord N—— was as much prejudiced in lord Henry's favour as Louisa was; and it was the most earnest wish of his heart to see him the husband of his daughter.

"Louisa," said he to her one day, "I expect a visitor soon, to spend some days with me; and I desire you to put on all your airs and graces, for he is worth having for a husband, I assure you; and I should be the happiest of fathers, were I to see you married to him."

"Indeed, sir," replied Louisa, turning very pale, "I do not wish to be married: indeed, I do not think I shall ever marry at all:" and as she said this, her eyes filled with tears.

"Pho, pho!—nonsense! girlish whims!" cried lord N——; "and I hope lord Henry Algernon will put other notions into your head."

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"Lord Henry Algernon, sir!" exclaimed Louisa trembling and faltering: "Is he—has he—"

"Has he what?—made proposals? No, to be sure;—why, he never saw you;—and I hope you are not vain enough to suppose that he is fallen in love with you from the report of your beauty: no; love at first sight is silly enough; but love without sight would be an atrocious absurdity indeed."

Covered with blushes, and her head hanging on her bosom, Louisa faintly replied,—"I,—I have *seen* lord Henry, sir."

"Well,—and what's that to the purpose?—I was not accusing you of being in love with him from report, was I?"

Louisa did not answer; she saw that her consciousness had nearly betrayed her; but, recovering herself, she asked whether lord Henry was really the guest whom her father expected at the castle.

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"Yes,—he is indeed: his father and I were old friends; and Algernon has owned that I have therefore some claim on the friendship of the son. He has desired that I would not invite company to meet him: so, girl, you will have him all to yourself; and, if you make the most of the opportunity, I dare say you may effect a conquest, which other women have vainly attempted."

"No, sir, no," replied Louisa; "I am wholly unworthy, indeed I am, to be the choice of such a man; and all I can hope is, that he will not look upon me with contempt."

"What! how! *contempt!* look upon you with contempt; a girl possessed of youth, beauty, understanding, and accomplishments; a lord's daughter too; and a rich heiress! Have more self-respect, I beg, miss Howard," cried lord N——.

"Alas! I have too much self-knowledge to have self-respect, sir," replied

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Louisa, bursting into tears, and retiring into her room, where various ideas engrossed her meditations: but the most delightful, and the one which she most loved to dwell upon, was the look which lord Henry, unconscious who she was, had given her as he passed her.

Still she thought that lord Henry was not a man to be captivated by mere outward charms; and though pleased to find that the man whom she admired was the choice of her father, she felt assured that she should be to him an object of indifference. She even learnt to think meanly of those talents on which she had before valued herself; and was alarmed lest lord N——, who was naturally vain of her accomplishments, and proud of displaying them, should obtrude on lord Henry, and exhibit for his admiration, what she now deemed incorrect drawings, and ill-coloured paintings; and should force her to exhibit her musical abilities before a

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man used, probably, to hear, and exclusively to relish, the performances of the first musicians in the metropolis.

"Whither is my self-confidence flown?" said Louisa, deeply sighing, as she eagerly seized on some of her framed designs and paintings, and removed them out of sight. "However, I am resolved lord Henry shall not see these."

Lord N—— entered the room as she was removing the last picture; and he stood aghast with astonishment. "May I beg leave to ask, miss Howard, what you are doing?" cried lord N——.

"I am moving these wretched drawings and paintings away, before lord Henry comes."

"And pray who told you they were wretched drawings and paintings? And why should not lord Henry see them?"

"Because, I am sure, he must think them wretched performances; and that I am very vain in sticking them up round

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the room, as if I thought they were perfection."

"And pray, miss Howard, who told you lord Henry was a judge of such things? I dare say I know much more of the matter than he does (for because a man can talk for hours in the house, I do not see that it follows that he must know every thing); and I tell you the drawings and paintings are good, very good; and to please *my vanity*, if not yours, I desire you to bring them back, and place them where they were before."

Louisa, with tears in her eyes, obeyed; but she could not help, though without hope of success, petitioning lord N—— not to ask her to sing or play to lord Henry.

Lord N—— was about to answer her rather indignantly, when, on observing her downcast eye, her cheek covered with blushes, and an unusual degree of awkwardness in her manner, a suspicion of the

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state of her heart rushed into his mind; and, chuckling with a sort of inward laugh, he only said, "Po, po, nonsense! silly girl!" and left the room, assured that Louisa would be lady Henry Algernon; as she would throw no obstacles in the way of the marriage, and his parental pride made him think it impossible that lord Henry should not fall in love with Louisa.

At length lord Henry arrived; and Louisa was presented to him by her father, full of apprehensions lest his lordship should have observed her confusion, and attributed it to a cause flattering to his vanity.

But she need not have been alarmed: lord Henry was no coxcomb; he was not like many men, who, though without one attractive quality of mind or person, are apt to conceive themselves objects of irresistible attraction to our sex; he saw in the blush of a lovely girl, at his ap-

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proach, a sign of nothing but youthful timidity; and though conscious that his alliance had been courted by more than one woman, he attributed the preference shown him to his very large possessions.

But this fear was not the only feeling which distressed Louisa. She saw evidently, by the manner in which lord Henry looked at her, that he did not remember that he had ever seen her before; she was conscious that he did not say to himself, as she hoped he might have said,—"That is the young lady I saw in lady W.'s carriage!"

However, she ceased to think of herself, her fears, and her disappointments, when lord Henry began to converse;—when she heard uttered, in a deep, impressive tone, those arguments and those truths, which had excited in her young but awakened mind a degree of enthusiasm equal to what she felt on reading the lives of her favourite heroes. She

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listened, and she loved; and she was not sorry that lord Henry, in the warmth of argument, forgot that she was present, because it enabled her to watch incessantly the fine expression of his countenance, unperceived by him, and without any imputation on her modesty.

After dinner, Louisa's expected trial began. Lord N——, at length, impatient to show off his daughter, desired lord Henry to observe the drawings and pictures round the room; adding, "I assure you, Algernon, they are all Louisa's doing, without any assistance from a master."

Perhaps lord Henry thought that was very evident, and Louisa feared that he did so: however, he did not utter so mortifying a truth; but, coldly looking at them, only said, "It must have taken you, madam, a great deal of time to complete these performances."

Louisa *curtsied* in answer:—her heart

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was full.—Not one word in commendation!—True, she did not expect he should *like them*; but others, and persons of acknowledged taste too, had said they were fine. "Well," thought Louisa, "he will not admire me for my powers as an *artist*,—that's clear; and he looks at me as if he considered me a mere child."

Nor was she mistaken. Lord Henry had hitherto considered all girls of eighteen as mere children, and he thought that no woman under five-and-twenty could engage his attention; and though he owned that Louisa was beautiful, he never imagined that he could feel affection for her, or inspire her with it.

Lord N——, as well as Louisa, felt that the exhibition of her powers of pencil had failed of effect: those of her voice and finger remained to be tried; and, in spite of her oft-expressed reluctance, she was forced to sit down to the instrument. She played first; the lesson was difficult;

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and Louisa blundered through all the difficult passages.

She ended, and lord Henry only observed, that he thought her fingers must ache.

She sung: her voice, from emotion and fear, was hoarse and thick, and her utterance imperfect; and when, abashed and mortified, she rose from the instrument, lord Henry thanked her for her readiness to oblige, even at great inconvenience to herself; for, he said, he had observed that she sung with great difficulty, and he feared she had a bad cold.

Louisa could hardly refrain from tears at this mortifying speech; but lord Henry was wholly unconscious that he had said any thing severe: for the truth was, he did not understand music; and he was too wise to pretend to give an opinion on subjects which he did not understand.—But though he could not tell whether Louisa sung well or ill, he could see that

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she sung with great effort, and that she was very hoarse; and he was sorry that she took such pains to please an auditor, on whom her painful exertions were wholly thrown away.

He therefore did not request her to sing another song; and Louisa felt convinced of the truth of the forebodings which led her to request lord N—— not to insist on a display of her musical talents; while the disappointed father began to think that though lord Henry was a man of letters, and a great orator, he had no general taste, and no universal knowledge.

After supper, the conversation turned on politics; and lord Henry talked on a most interesting political question, on which he had made a celebrated speech, that had been afterwards printed, and very generally circulated.

"I remember, Algernon," said lord N——, "that you said exactly what you are now saying, in your celebrated speech

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on that question. Did he not, Louisa?—I dare say you can repeat the passage; for I am sure you know it all by heart."

"Is it possible," cried lord Henry, blushing with surprise and pleasure, "that miss Howard should have done me so much honour?" while Louisa, in great confusion, cast her eyes down, and said not a word.

"Answer, Louisa," cried lord N——. "Let lord Henry hear that passage which you so much admired."

"Pray, pray, do not ask me, sir. Indeed I cannot do it."

"Well, if you will not repeat it, you might let him see your translation of it into French, as an exercise. I am sure you need not be ashamed of it."

But at that moment Louisa was ashamed of her father, herself, and every thing, and positively refused to comply; and lord Henry, feeling for her girlish bashfulness, as he considered it, told lord N——,

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that though he should be proud and delighted to be indulged with a sight so flattering to his vanity, he begged Louisa might not be urged any further on the subject; and he afterwards added, that he could not have supposed subjects of such a nature as that which it had been his lot to discuss in the debate in question, could have interested and engaged the attention of so young a lady.

"Oh, I assure you," answered lord N——, "that Louisa finds something in all your speeches, lord Henry, to interest and amuse her; and she expects the newspaper now with more eagerness than she does any new novel: for she likens you to some one of her favourite orators and patriots in Plutarch, and—Of which of them is it, Louisa, that lord Henry reminds you?"

Louisa immediately, like a sheepish girl, as lord Henry thought, though in reality like a conscious and delicate wo-

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man, terrified lest her favourite should be led by her father's indiscreet communications to suspect his influence over her mind, suddenly left the room, and retired to her own chamber, to recover the shock which her delicacy had received.

It would have been some consolation to her, had she known that lord Henry felt her absence; and that while Lord N—— pettishly remarked on the caprice and perverseness of girls, he said that such blushing timidity and reserve as miss Howard's he had rarely the pleasure of seeing, in the present times, united to such beauty and accomplishments.

This compliment soothed the irritated feelings of lord N——; and when his daughter ventured to enter the room again, he took no notice of her abrupt departure, but, kindly taking her hand, seated her by him; while lord Henry, for the first time conscious of having attracted the attention of youth and beauty,

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was delighted to see her return; and when Louisa ventured to raise her eyes from the ground, she had the satisfaction of perceiving lord Henry's fixed upon her with a look of marked approbation which she never discovered in them before.

This restored her to some degree of confidence; and when, during some interesting conversation on national affairs, she saw that lord Henry did her the honour to address his discourse to her as well as to her father, she ventured to look as if she understood and was interested in the subject in debate, though she properly declined joining in it.

It was late before lord Henry retired for the night; and he could not help saying to himself, as he laid his head on his pillow,—"She is certainly the most beautiful creature I ever saw; but it is very singular that she should be interested in reading my speeches." And so far was he from the presumption and conceit of

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many of his sex, that he did not see in lord N——'s conduct any wish to engage his affection for his daughter, nor in hers a partiality in his favour, which she with difficulty concealed.

The next day, Louisa, being less embarrassed, ventured to converse with lord Henry till his usual hour for study arrived; when he retired to his own apartment, and read till the hour for riding came, while Louisa resumed her usual occupations; and lord Henry having, while in his apartment, overheard her sing a plaintive air, well suited to her voice, he had received a degree of pleasure from her performance, which he had never experienced from music before; and eagerly entering the room, he requested Louisa to favour him with that sweet song again.

Surprised and pleased, she immediately complied: but her voice was gone; and her faltering tones would have made any man but lord Henry impute the change in

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her manner of singing to a cause more powerful than the mere timidity to which he attributed it.

Day succeeded to day, and still found lord Henry talking,—not love, but politics,—to the flattered Louisa; and perhaps he was the first man who ever won a woman's heart in this manner: but Louisa was pleased to be treated as a rational being, and lord Henry was charmed at having found a young and beautiful woman whom he could amuse and interest without flattering her charms, or decrying those of others.

Insensibly the cold dignity of his manner relaxed, and he lingered in the breakfast-room after the tea-table was removed, instead of retiring as usual to his studies. The first day Louisa beheld this novelty with a beating heart, as indicative of the increased interest which lord Henry took in her conversation; but when a second and a third time he did the same, and

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even seemed to do himself great violence, while with a look, which she dared not encounter, he slowly left the room, a transport, wholly unknown before, thrilled through her frame; and, shutting herself up in her own apartment, she sat brooding over the sweet conciousness that she was, at least, not indifferent to the object of her unqualified admiration.

Lord Henry retired for the purpose of study; but he did not find it so easy a matter to fix his thoughts on his books as he had been accustomed to do. While he was looking apparently at the pages of Cicero's oratory, he was in reality thinking of the oratory of the dark blue eyes which he had just quitted; and while exclaiming, "If she had been eight-and-twenty instead of eighteen, I should certainly have been caught," he found his attention entirely diverted from his studies by a landscape from nature, drawn in

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water-colours by Louisa, which hung opposite to him.

"She is certainly a wonderful girl," cried lord Henry sighing: "as my head aches, and I cannot study, I will go ask her to take a walk." He did so; and they did not return time enough to dress before dinner, or even to enter the dining-room before the first course: but lord N—— did not chide them; he only turned away his head to hide an arch smile which took possession of his face, as Louisa blushing, and lord Henry apologizing, took their seats at the table.

The day after, several of the neighbouring nobility and gentry were invited to dinner; and lord Henry was surprised to find that he felt pain rather than pleasure, when he heard that his favourite young friend lord S——, Mr. K——, and several other elegant and distinguished young men, were to be of the party;

and he was the more surprised, because, when he was first introduced to Louisa, he had said in himself, "She would be a charming wife for lord S——!"

The expected party arrived; and lord Henry, for the first time in his life, having found it a difficult matter to tie his cravat, or to decide whether he should wear powder or not, entered the drawing-room, and with a sort of graceful awkwardness, if I may be allowed the expression, advanced to pay his compliments to the company. Lord S—— was seated near Louisa, and conversing with her in a very animated manner; but he rose on his entrance, and lord Henry was conscious that the ingenuous expression of pleasure with which lord S—— met him, did not meet with an adequate return in his salutation.

"My dear Algernon, it is an age since I have seen you," said lord S——. "It

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is nearly six weeks, I believe," he coldly replied.

"O! more, much more; but I do not wonder that, in such society," bowing to Louisa, "days seem moments, and weeks days."

Lord Henry blushed, and thought his young friend was grown very pert; nor was he displeased to see that Louisa looked grave and angry on the occasion, while her complexion, now pale and now red, betrayed strong emotion.—"Why is she so agitated?" was a question which he could not help asking himself; and as he led her to her seat, he could not help gently pressing her hand as he relinquished it. He sat on one side of her, and lord S—— on the other; and the former, who had not doubted but that the youth, wit, and uncommonly fine person of lord S—— would withdraw Louisa's attention almost wholly from himself that

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day, saw with delight, wholly new and surprising to him, that she listened to his words with the same pleased and eager attention as she had ever done; that at times she nearly turned her back on lord S——; and, when she recollected her rudeness, apologized for it with a blush of such "sweet consciousness," as made her more fascinating than ever: and, elated with a triumph which he had not dared to hope, lord Henry, when alone in his apartment at night, owned to himself that he had never passed so happy a day; and he sighed as he exclaimed, "I wish she were eight-and-twenty, instead of eighteen!"

The ensuing evening, while lord N——, lord Henry, and Louisa, were sitting together, and the former, who was an active justice of the peace, had spread a number of law-books before him, which he was turning over to prepare himself for some debate that was to take place at the

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next county meeting, he told lord Henry that he had lately purchased a book of law reports, which he found very useful.

"Charming indeed, I dare say," replied lord Henry, whose eyes were fixed on Louisa's profile, while she was bending her fine neck over a design for a plateau which she was drawing.

Lord N—— stared:—he had never heard the epithet "charming" applied to a book of law reports before; but, when he saw where lord Henry's attention was directed, he found that, if not an *appropriate*, charming was a very natural word for him to have uppermost in his mind.

"You must know, lord Henry," continued lord N——, "that there is one decision of lord Mansfield's in the reports I mention, in which, but with all due deference, I differ from the learned lord; and I should be very happy to submit my

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doubts to you, who, like myself, in the early part of your life, studied the law."

For the first time, lord Henry felt uncomfortable at hearing the *early part of his life* mentioned—as if he was now no longer young; — but he begged lord N—— to state the case, and his objections.

Lord N—— went on; but had not read much of the case, when lord Henry exclaimed,—"Miss Howard, you want something."

"Yes;—a knife to cut my pencil."

"Here is one:—let me have the happiness of cutting it for you."

Lord N— bit his lip; for, though glad to see lord Henry's attention to his daughter, he did not like to be so completely thrown in the background; and he rather angrily remarked that, as the case in point was one of great importance respecting property, he could wish that lord Henry would deign to attend to him.

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He then continued—but, in five minutes, Louisa dropped her India rubber; and lord Henry started up to seek it.

"Psha!" muttered lord N——, closing the book.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," cried lord Henry; "go on; and I promise you in future uninterrupted attention."

"Yes, till that girl wants her pencil cut again, I suppose, and then I shall be forgotten:—no, no, I shall content myself with begging you to take the trouble of looking over this decision when you are alone in your own apartments."—Lord Henry promised obedience, and the evening ended.

Three weeks had now elapsed, and still lord Henry lingered at the castle; and had not resolution to refuse the every-day-renewed invitation of the hospitable peer to stay longer. Louisa, indeed, never pressed him to lengthen his visit with her tongue; but she looked so grave

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when he talked of going, and so pleased when he consented to stay, that he could not help seeing that his society at least was dear to her.

The next evening, lord N——, who had been absent all day, requested to know lord Henry's opinion of the case which he had given him to read.

"My lord," returned lord Henry blushing and stammering, "I really,—I protest,—I, I am quite ashamed; but I forgot, really; I have never once looked at it; but I will go now and study it." So saying, and before lord N—— could call out that tea was coming up, lord Henry, as much to hide his confusion as for any other reason, had hastened to his apartment; for he was conscious that his thoughts had been employed on another decision, and one of more importance in his eyes than any one even of lord Mansfield's: he had been examining the pleadings of his own heart, and the de-

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cision of his conscience had been—that he was in love.

But as lord N—— could not, he believed, guess how his morning hours had been employed, he feared that he must appear guilty of great neglect, and was therefore seating himself to examine the case in point, when he was summoned to tea; and he re-entered the drawing-room just as lord N—— (finding Louisa had neglected to settle some difficult accounts for him during his absence) was telling her, with a mixture of fun and severity, that it was only too evident that she was *desperately in love.*

As he said this, Louisa turned round, saw lord Henry, and knew from his countenance that he had heard what passed. immediately conscience-struck, and overcome with the idea that her secret was known to him, she burst into tears, and left the room.

"Poor thing! poor thing! she is grown

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strangely irritable," muttered lord N——; and when he found lord Henry in the room, he did not wonder at Louisa's emotion: but he saw, and with ill-suppressed joy, that lord Henry looked as disturbed and as foolish as she had done; and that, soon after tea, at which Louisa, on pretence of head-ache, declined appearing, he, too, pleaded indisposition, and begged leave to retire and sit alone.

Indeed, he had need of solitude:—for, not daring to think that if Louisa was in love (of which lord N——'s exclamation of "Poor thing!" made it impossible for him to doubt), he was the object of her attachment, he saw himself in his opinion "entangled in a hopeless passion!"

Yes, he indeed loved, and with a devotedness, and exclusion of every other idea, that astonished him. He had yet to learn, that love knows not a divided empire, and reigns a tyrant if he reigns at all. He had flattered himself, like many

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men of superior intelligence, but more conversant with books than the human heart, that he, when he loved, should love like a being of superior rationality; that is, should love as much as reason warranted, but no more. Alas! he soon found that to control his passion by reason was impossible; that his books ceased to interest him; that the *amor patriæ* seemed a feeling too abstracted for a sensitive being to busy himself with; and that, after he had convinced himself that his love was as rationally founded, if not more so than that of any man who ever loved before, he proved that he was up to all the phrensy of passion, by catching himself repeating—

> "Louisa, who 'd ever be wise,
> If madness be loving of thee?"

"Yes, yes," said lord Henry, pacing the room as he spoke, "it is certain she

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has an attachment,—and who can be the object of it?—She does me the honour to esteem me and admire my conversation, and therefore I have been able, by my society, to beguile her of her cares: but to suppose that she felt more than friendship for me, would be most absurd and improbable.—Yet, why? It is not more improbable than that I should have fallen in love with her:"—and his steps became quicker, as the thought of being beloved thrilled through his whole frame.

But he soon sunk into despondency again;—and he convinced himself that Louisa was attached to some young man, not her equal in fortune; and that lord N—— had forbidden their union:—"If so," said lord Henry to himself, "I will be her friend;—I will try to prevail on her to confide in me; and if I be right in my conjectures, I will endeavour to conquer her father's objections:—yes, I will make her happy, though at the

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risk of making myself — Psha! — the thought is madness!"

Here, he threw himself across the bed, absorbed in gloomy reflections.—At last, he started up, and exclaimed, "Yes—it shall be so!—Yes—I shall never marry; my fortune is large; and, if fortune be the only obstacle,—I will—yes—I will do something, that shall prove I am not unworthy the high idea she entertains of my character:"—and, resolving to prove himself a great hero, lord Henry luckily fell asleep: but his rest was broken and disturbed; and he arose the next morning not at all improved in beauty by the agitation of his mind.

"How old I look!" cried he, as he stood at the glass:—"No, no, it is impossible that I can be beloved by her:—fool that I was, not to see the danger which I was incurring!"

Louisa had also passed a sleepless night, for she feared that her secret was disco-

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vered, and that the impression which she had reason to think she had made on lord Henry's heart, would be destroyed by the disgust which the knowledge of her weakness might excite in him. She therefore, like lord Henry, appeared at the breakfast-table with pale cheeks and sunk eyes; and each of them, from different feelings, carefully avoided looking at the other.

After breakfast, when they were alone together, lord Henry, while debating with himself whether he should speak to her according to his plan of the night before, happening to cast his eyes on her, was so shocked at the mournful expression of her countenance, and at her altered appearance, that he could not bear to defer the intended conversation one moment longer—but hastily seizing her hand, he exclaimed, "Dear, dear miss Howard! I see, with agony unspeakable, that you are unhappy, and that some secret cause is

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wearing away your peace :—alas ! I guess what the cause is; and would to heaven it were in my power to remove it! But that, I doubt, is impossible :—still—" here he paused; for Louisa, convinced by this speech that he saw her love for him, and meant to say that he vainly wished to return it, had fallen back in her chair nearly insensible.

She soon, however, recovered herself; when, in his terror at her situation, she heard lord Henry make use of such expressions, and saw him hang over her with such tenderness, as convinced her that she was beloved, and that she had misunderstood his meaning: and assuring him that she was quite well again, she begged him to go on with the conversation which her illness had interrupted.

He did so; and, to the surprise of Louisa, she found, that lord Henry, so far from imagining himself beloved by her, suspected that she loved another; and

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offered, though at the expense of his own happiness, to be the mediator between her and her father!

"Generous man!" cried Louisa, bursting into tears;—"how little do you know my heart!"

"You have read mine, Louisa," replied lord Henry: "be equally ingenuous, and—"

At this moment lord N—— entered; and Louisa, finding herself at a loss how to answer lord Henry's last address, took that opportunity of retiring.

"I am afraid, my lord Henry Algernon," said lord N—— with affected gravity, "that my entrance was very *mal-à-propos*;—miss Howard and you seemed rehearsing a very dismal scene together, and one not at all in my way."

"You have a right, my lord, to know all that has passed," replied lord Henry.—"You have led me to think that miss Howard has an attachment—and an unhappy

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one ;—for I attribute her frequent agitation to the consciousness that the object of her love will never be approved by you."

"The object of her love, lord Henry, is approved by me, from the very bottom of my soul."

Lord Henry turned pale, and sunk into a chair ;—for he found that the imagined obstacle did not exist, and his intended and painful act of *heroism* would be of no avail : besides, he now found that, when the evil he feared was certain, it was not to be borne with any thing like fortitude.

"You are ill, Algernon ; you are ill : what is the matter ?"

"Oh, my lord," replied lord Henry, "I find I am a poor weak being. I began this conversation, resolved to try to prevail on you to consent to your daughter's union with the man of her choice ; and to do all I could to remove the obstacles to it : but I find that no ob-

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stacles exist, and all my boasted heroism is entirely gone."

"And why should my daughter's union with the man of her heart make you unhappy?" asked the malicious lord N——.

"Because,—do not despise me for my weakness and presumption,—because—I love her myself!"

Lord N—— immediately gave way to a long deliberate laugh, which caused lord Henry to rise from his seat with great indignation.

"Nay, Algernon, don't be angry," cried he; "but I must laugh, upon my honour I must.—Go, go,—you are a very clever fellow; but I believe that in knowledge of the heart of a woman, there is not a boor on my estate who is not your superior:—there, go and find Louisa; tell her what you have told me; and tell her also, that I command her to let her answer be open and explicit,—for that, if

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she will not speak out, I will speak for her."

"Is it possible? can it be?" exclaimed lord Henry, trembling with joyful anticipation.

"I shall tell you nothing more, Algernon; only, remember, that I shall stay here to give you both my blessing, when you think proper to ask it."

Lord Henry instantly ran in search of Louisa: he found her in the garden; and saw her tremble and turn pale at his approach, from a mixture of modesty and joy; for she knew by his countenance that an explanation had taken place between him and lord N——. In a few minutes, as it appeared to the lovers, but in an hour, as it really was, lord Henry led Louisa to lord N——, and claimed the promised blessing.

In a very few weeks after, the marriage took place; but on the wedding-day, a proud day for Louisa, though she

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was the rich heiress of lord N——, as it made her the wife of one of the most distinguished men in England; yes, even on that welcome day which gave her to the idol of her heart, her happiness was overclouded by the consciousness of not deserving it, and the conviction, that on lord Henry's ignorance of her character was founded his affection for her.—She knew, that were he acquainted with her extravagance and her habits of self-indulgence, he could not honour her with his love, because he must withhold his esteem.

But how should he become acquainted with the errors, the past errors as she called them, which disgraced her? They were known only to herself, and those who could have no motive to disclose them to lord Henry; and, in spite of her usual hatred of disguise, she felt rejoiced that her foibles were not written on her brow.

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On their return from church, lord N—— took the bride and bridegroom into his study; and again joining their hands and blessing them, he said, in a faltering voice, and smiling through his tears, "You meant, you know, Algernon, to play the hero, and try to make my girl happy with the man of her heart, though by so doing you made yourself miserable: but, luckily, you were spared those heroic doings and sufferings; and now if there be any hero amongst us, it is myself. Here am I parting with my only child, the pride and delight of my age, and pretending to be jocose while my heart is bursting."

Here he gave way to a flood of tears, in which even lord Henry was not ashamed to join.

"But I know it is for Louisa's happiness, so I will be consoled:—I knew she would marry; it was natural that she should: therefore, all I wished was, that

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her choice should be one approved by the feelings both of her heart and mine, and which should confer honour and happiness on both. In short, I fixed on you, Algernon, and Louisa did the same:—so, take her, as I said before, and God bless you both! She is a treasure, I assure you: perhaps I am partial; but I really do believe that she has not a fault in the world."

"O! my father!" cried Louisa bursting into a flood of tears, wrung from her by remorse and consciousness, "you are partial, indeed:—believe him not, lord Henry; I am faulty, very faulty; and—"

Lord Henry clasped her to his bosom, protesting that he believed her father's testimony rather than her own.

No faults! — Alas! she had faults hanging like a blight over the promising harvest of her happiness; though, in the self-flattery of her heart, she fancied that the blight was past, and nought but healthy sunshine near.

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Just before the marriage, Louisa received, from the lavish bounty of her father, a considerable sum of money to expend on wedding finery; and never was money more welcome, nor more wanted—for her creditors, both in town and country, had been clamorous for payment; and had they not been so, a feeling of honour, as well as of shame and apprehension, forbade Louisa to load with her debts the loved and revered being whom she was going to make her protector and monitor through life.

"No!" she exclaimed, "with this money I will pay my present debts; and at the same time make a solemn resolution to incur no future ones."

The first part of her resolution she immediately fulfilled, and, instead of purchasing bridal ornaments and expensive dresses, contented herself with simple though elegant attire, such as the slender state of her finances warranted; while

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every one who knew the generous temper of lord N——, and who expected to see it displayed in his daughter's appearance as a bride, gazed on her *simple attire* with wonder. No one was more surprised than lord N—— himself; and, but from unexpected circumstances, Louisa would have been under the necessity of owning the truth to him: but he, and indeed many of his acquaintance, aware of Louisa's profuse generosity, suspected that she had bestowed in acts of secret benevolence, the money given her for the decoration of her person; and Lord N——, making his parental pride amends by imparting these suspicions to others, for the gratification of which his daughter's plain appearance as a bride deprived him, at length declared his ideas on this subject to Louisa herself, and in the presence of her husband.

The conscious Louisa started, and blushed deeply at a supposition so false,

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and yet so flattering; and, had she been alone with lord N——, would have had virtue enough, perhaps, to have avowed the truth, and scorned to receive praise while certain of deserving censure:—but lord Henry, who till then had not observed the simplicity of his bride's attire, gazed on her with looks of such approving delight, when he heard the modesty of her apparel attributed to a cause so noble, that she had not resolution enough to destroy an illusion so gratifying to him and so flattering to herself; and casting her eyes on the ground, while the blush of conscious duplicity glowed on her cheek, she remained in an equivocal silence, which confirmed lord N—— in his suspicions, and gave to her the amiable semblance of a benevolent being, doing "good by stealth, and blushing to find it fame."

Alas! trifling as this little circumstance seemed even to Louisa, who varnished

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over its culpability, representing to herself that a disclosure of the truth would have been cruel to her husband and dangerous to her own peace, it had a pernicious influence on her future conduct. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*; and she who has once compromised so far with her conscience as to resist the pleadings of sincerity, and be contented to be praised for actions which she never performed, has laid the foundation-stone of future vice, and tarnished, perhaps for life, the fair image of virtue in her bosom.

But Louisa did not reason thus, though her feelings were continually reproaching her; and scarcely could she support herself under the variety of emotions which assailed her, when lord Henry, as soon as they were alone together, told her, that as he found she was likely to make so good an almoner, he should intrust to her many sums of which he had been in

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the habit of disposing himself. — "O! do not trust me!" was almost on her lips; for the feeling of her frailty was throbbing painfully at her heart: but again she struggled with her best feelings; again shame and pride got the better of sincerity, and the once habitual ingenuousness of her nature received its death-blow.

And what consoled her under the consciousness of her guilt?—The conviction that lord Henry, while deceived, was happy; that a mind so honourable as his, and which had such high ideas of female excellence, would start back with horror at the idea of her thoughtless extravagance, and that with his esteem she should also lose his love.

Lord Henry thought the same: he imagined that he could not love a woman whom he did not esteem, and that tenderness would cease at the first known cessation of that excellence which had origi-

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nally produced it. He knew more of human knowledge than of human passions; he had read; he had thought; he had *reasoned*;—but he had only now learnt to *feel*; and he felt deeply. The present enchanted him; the future smiled on him; and, incapable of supposing that the fair creature to whom every faculty of his soul was devoted, could have even the germ of any vice in her likely to destroy her happiness and his own, he looked upon that hour of his existence as lost in which he had never loved, or been beloved, and pitied every man who was not, like himself, a husband.

For months this state of enjoyment lasted. Louisa, passionately attached to her husband, and living wholly in the country, where she had no temptation to indulge in those expensive habits so prejudicial to her respectability, was deserving of all the fondness which lord Henry lavished on her; and, with the sanguine

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self-love of eighteen, she thought her only fault was cured, merely because she was not in circumstances to call it into action.

The spring was now advancing; and as the metropolis was beginning to fill, Louisa could not conceal from herself that she should like to exhibit her lovely form in the fashionable circles, as the bride of lord Henry Algernon: it was with ill-suppressed pleasure, therefore, that she heard lord Henry inform her, his duty in parliament now required his constant residence for some months in town, and that he must, though with extreme reluctance, give up the happiness of a country life, for the empty bustle of town amusements.

To London they went; and Louisa, thinking she had earned by months of self-denial a right to relax in her œconomy, drove to her old milliner's as soon as she arrived, in order to lay out some

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of her husband's newly-received bounty in a court dress and other dresses; but she wisely and firmly resolved, that she would pay for every thing as soon as it was finished, and on no account contract any more debts. The dresses were finished; and the bill being, though with great difficulty, procured, Louisa, accompanied by a young lady who was to visit with her as bride-maid, went, the morning after to discharge it.

While the account was settling, various were the temptations to fresh expenses thrown in Louisa's way: but she disregarded them all—when her young companion, who was more favoured by nature than fortune, was struck with the beauty of a turban spotted with silver; and, putting it on, she looked so beautiful in it, that every one in the room exclaimed, "You must buy it, you never looked so well in any head-dress before!"

"But I can't afford to buy it," cried

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the mortified girl; "I am not a rich bride, like lady Henry."

"You soon would be a bride, I am sure, madam," replied the artful milliner, "if you were to wear that turban; it seems made on purpose for you."

"Well, dear me! I will go home, and ask mamma to let me have it."

"O, madam, it will be gone directly; you can't be sure of it, unless you take it now—and it will take some time to get another done."

"Bless me! what can I do? I can't pay for it myself."

"O, madam, I will trust you."

"Aye,—but I dare not run in debt; mamma would never forgive me:—yet, I am so tempted!"

Louisa heaved a deep sigh at the danger of her young friend; nor could she help blaming herself severely for having so hastily expended on her own person the noble bounty of her husband; be-

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cause, had she been less indulgent to herself, she would have been able, without a fault, to ornament the lovely person of her friend.

"What shall I do, dear lady Henry?" said miss Selby: "what do you advise me to do? Shall I take the turban on trust?"

"No,—you must not disobey your mother on any account; and believe me, that a habit of running in debt once acquired, is scarcely ever to be conquered."

"But then, what can I do?" replied miss Selby pettishly,—"for I must and will have the turban, that's certain."

"Then I must give it to you as a present," replied lady Henry sighing; and, after a pause, she added, "Let it be set down to my account:"—then, with a reproving conscience, she hastened into her carriage:—but, when there, the rapturous thanks of miss Selby in a degree reconciled her to herself;—but when one

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has broken through a wise and virtuous resolution, where is the opiate that can at first succeed in lulling one's self-reproaches to rest!

The next day, Louisa was prevailed upon by miss Selby to go with her and another young lady to the same milliner's, that the latter might order a turban in all respects like miss Selby's.

They had not been long in the room before a new-invented mantle, which no one had yet seen, was displayed; and by the officious zeal of her companions, urged on by the milliner, it was thrown over the graceful shoulders of Louisa.

"O, madam, were you to wear that mantle, my fortune would be made," cried the specious milliner.

"Do, buy it, pray do," cried both the girls, "it is so becoming to you!"

The looking-glass unfortunately told Louisa the same thing;—but then, her resolution not to run up a bill!—Then,

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on the other hand, a bill was begun for miss Selby's turban, and this would add only twenty guineas to it.—At last, however, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, and, running into her carriage, removed from the temptation which she had not power to face, and resist.

In the evening, miss Selby, in presence of lord N——, reproached Louisa with her ill-timed œconomy; and his lordship declared that if twenty guineas would purchase the elegant ornament in question, he would give his daughter that sum immediately. This offer Louisa thankfully accepted; and she reflected, with no small delight, that her self-denial and resolution in the morning had now met with their reward. It was then agreed that the money should be immediately sent, and the mantle purchased, in order that lord N—— should see it, and be able to judge of the beauty and value of the present. Louisa, therefore, took the mo-

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ney, and left the room in order to write a note with it to the milliner, when she was informed that a poor woman, whose name she well knew, earnestly requested to see her: she instantly desired her to be shown into her dressing-room.

This distressed object, as she really was, had often been relieved by her bounty; but never had she told so piteous a tale before, and never had her distress been so great. Never had Louisa been so perplexed: she could not bear to send her away unrelieved, yet she had not the means of relieving her, for she had already sufficiently taxed the generosity of her husband and her father; and the sum requisite to remove the poor woman's present wants was not less than several guineas, and Louisa had them not to give.

But at this moment she held the twenty guineas in her hand, designed for the mantle; and, as her fingers grasped them,

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a pang of something very like remorse shot across her mind, and she mentally exclaimed, "What! shall I prefer the gratification of my vanity to the permanent relief of a distressed fellow-creature? No;—the sacrifice shall be made:" and immediately summoning a confidential servant, she gave him fifteen guineas, and, desiring him to accompany the poor woman home, ordered him to lay out whatever part of the sum was necessary, in removing her present difficulties, and ensuring the future comfort of her and her family; and then, having dismissed the object of her bounty, was on the point of re-entering the drawing-room, when

Miss Selby entered, saying, "Well, is the mantle arrived? I am so anxious for its coming!—for we all agreed that you must go in it to lady D——'s assembly to-night; for you would not use Mrs. C—— well, if you did not wear it directly."

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"Nonsense!" replied Louisa; "I have not sent for it, nor do I know that I shall; I don't want it."

Nothing could equal miss Selby's surprise at this speech: at first she was silent with astonishment; but when she recovered herself, such was the eloquent volubility with which she expatiated on lord N——'s disappointment, on the beauty of the mantle, on its becomingness to lady Henry's shape, on its being a duty which she owed the inventor to show it off to the best advantage, (which her wearing it would certainly do,) that Louisa lamented in secret her inability to gratify her vanity and her benevolence at the same time; especially as she knew not how to excuse to lord N— not expending the money for the purpose for which he gave it; as she could not do this without telling him the use which she had made of it; and had, besides a graceful unwillingness to disclose her bounty, a certain conscious-

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ness that her father, who often laughed at her romantic charities, would in this instance, and with some justice, say, that she had given more than the urgent necessity of the case required.

At length, overpowered by the entreaties of her young companion, and urged by her own weakness, she resolved to send for the mantle, though unable to pay for it; and Mrs. C—— was desired to place the mantle to her account, as well as the turban.

Alas! in all of us, how quickly a vice treads on the heels of a virtue!—To be brief: Louisa had now completely broken the wise resolution never to run in debt again, and in a manner almost resembling a good action; and now to stop herself in this fatal career was impossible;—debt succeeded to debt, incurred either to gratify her own wants, or those of her friends: she became the arbiter and idol of fashion, extravagance succeeded to extravagance,

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and when the time for leaving town arrived, she found herself infinitely more involved than she was before she married.

True it was that lord Henry, aware that her expenses, from her rank in life and situation as a bride, must have been extraordinary, presented her with a considerable sum of money; but, conscious of her embarrassments, and eager to try any means, however desperate, of extricating herself, in a moment of rashness she had allowed herself to be seduced to join a party of fashionable gamesters, and she lost in two sittings the well-meant bounty of her confiding and unsuspecting husband.

I will not attempt to describe her feelings when, conscious of conduct which must, if known, for ever forfeit the esteem of lord Henry, she turned her back on the mischievous pleasures of the metropolis, and returned to those scenes, a self-

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convicted culprit, which she left full of self-confidence and virtuous exultation.

Lord Henry saw the gloom that hung on her brow, but attributed it entirely to fatigue, from the constant routine of [illegible] to which she had been obliged; and while he tenderly soothed, fondly caressed her, welcomed her with unabated affection to their country abode, and called her the pride as well as happiness of his life,—conscience-struck and overwhelmed with self-reproaches, she sunk into his arms, and was conveyed to her chamber in a state of insensibility.

Salutary are the pangs of conscience, when the person tortured by them is left at full leisure to feel their corroding power; but this was not the case with Louisa:—in less than a month, a number of gay and invited friends came down to spend some weeks at their house, and she had scarcely a moment for serious reflection.

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The dissipated, and the inventive, had always some plan of expensive amusement to offer, some tempting proposal for new decorations, or improvements, of the house or grounds; and Louisa having once been led to own that she should delight to give a *fête champêtre*, her giddy friend miss Selby, and some others of the gay group, ran immediately to lord Henry to inform him how eagerly his wife desired this enchanting entertainment.

For one moment lord Henry, on hearing this, doubted whether his wife was as free from female folly as his doting fancy had painted her; but, the next instant, he recollected that complaisance merely, perhaps, had led her to approve of a scheme so fantastic; and he coolly replied, that if lady Henry really wished to give a *fête* of that description, he should certainly consent to it, as his fondest wish was to gratify all her inclinations.

He then accompanied the self-appointed

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ambassadress to Louisa, who heard with painful confusion what had passed, as she was conscious that if her husband knew to how much her yearly expenditure had amounted, he would have thought it imprudent, even with his ample fortune, to indulge in expenses of such a nature.

But in vain did she assure lord Henry that she had no wish to give the *fête* in question. Her generous husband, convinced that she refused to own her wishes merely from a principle of prudence highly honourable to her, was the more eager to indulge her; and Louisa not only was obliged at last to allow this costly entertainment to take place, but saw herself forced to incur, on account of it, many personal expenses which she might otherwise have avoided.

Under these painful embarrassments, she had sometimes thoughts of applying to lord N—— for relief; but she knew that as her mother's fortune came to her

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on her marriage, his lordship's income was so greatly reduced, that he could scarcely keep up the state requisite to his rank: therefore she felt, but too truly, that all she had to do was to bear her well-merited distress in patience and in silence,—while, though delighting in her husband's society, and in reality prizing nothing so highly, the consciousness of having acted in a manner unworthy of his wife, made her shrink appalled from moments of unreserved and solitary conversation with him, and fly eagerly to the society of those who, by their folly or their wit, could banish reflection, and substitute glittering gaiety for the more chaste splendour of that cheerfulness which springs from a heart at peace with itself.

Amongst those whom Louisa selected as capable of banishing unpleasant reflections from her mind, was a Mr. Trelawney, a man in the prime of life, well born, well connected, (for the

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blood of several noble families mingled in his veins,) and who had improved his natural graces by several years residence in foreign courts.

Mr. Trelawney had specious and amusing, if not sterling, talents: he wrote pretty verses, told stories with considerable humour, had always *le mot pour rire*, as the French say, and was particularly happy in giving in conversation rapid sketches of the prominent traits of character in his acquaintance, a talent by which we are all fond of being amused when it is exercised on others, but which we are not disposed to regard with complacency when we have reason to suspect it exercised on ourselves.

In short, he was calculated to inspire almost every feeling but that of *confidence*; for, to a discerning eye, he always appeared a masked battery:—while his lips uttered moral sentiments, his looks alarmed apprehensive modesty by their

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libertine expression; and while kindness and admiration were the language of his tongue, his eye seemed to threaten sarcasm; and while it smiling seemed to invite to unreserve, it was in reality on the watch, seeking prey for satire and severity.

But sarcasm and the point of fashionable satire were not all the danger to be apprehended from Mr. Trelawney: he was a libertine, not so much from passion as from system; he laid it down as a maxim that every woman was inclined to gallantry, and that every man was therefore justified in putting it in her power to gratify her inclinations.

He was convinced that every woman's honour might be made the victim of attack, if the engines of fear, shame, interest, or vanity, were employed against it; and he did not believe any of the sex to be capable of remaining virtuous, if exposed to a strong temptation to be otherwise.

Accordingly, though he was called a

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very good husband, wrote verses to his wife on the birth of every child, and on the anniversaries of their marriage, he was the willing slave, and ruler in expectation, of each new beauty who blazed in the sphere of fashion.

Louisa Howard, in spite of all her loveliness and talents, he had always neglected; but lady Henry Algernon, the wife of a man whose superiority of abilities he had often felt, admired, and envied, was a conquest worthy of his genius; and while he enumerated to himself her graces, her beauties, and her accomplishments, and thought of her increasing celebrity, "All these," he triumphantly exclaimed, "shall be made minister to my pleasure, or my ambition:" — and the siege was immediately begun; but neither avowedly nor actively. He had penetration and knowledge of character, and he did justice to the virtue of Louisa; for he saw that she had *then* at least no disposition to

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gallantry and intrigue, as he knew that she was passionately devoted to her husband.

The other pretenders to the favour of Louisa, superficial, thoughtless, indiscriminating men of fashion, flattered themselves that she must have a heart to bestow, and that they might become objects of her preference, because they were sure it was impossible that she should love lord Henry.

"And why impossible?" said Trelawney one day to some of these weak observers.

"O, because he is near twenty years older than she is, and is such an ugly fellow: besides, he is so ill-dressed, and so grave:—nay, you must own that she could not marry him for love."

Trelawney turned away smiling contemptuously; for he knew that she *did* marry for love, and that his chance for success in his pursuit was not at all to be founded on her probable preference of

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him in process of time, but on certain weaknesses of character which, even while he was the object rather of her dislike than her love, would put her happiness perhaps entirely in his power.

He had seen in her a degree of irresolution, an indecision, and an inability to withstand temptation, though her reason immediately pointed out the folly of compliance, on which he founded his expectations of becoming the arbiter of her fate; while, as he never offended her principles by any marked and improper attention, Louisa treated him with a degree of confidence and unreserve which enabled him to gain a great ascendancy over her, and made the plan he had in view more easy of execution.

In the ensuing February lord Henry and Louisa returned to London; the former dissatisfied with his residence in the country that year, because his house had been rarely free from company; and

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firmly resolved that the next summer his domestic enjoyments should not be so broken in upon.

He would have been seriously alarmed, as well as displeased, had he known that, after he was retired to his own apartment to read an hour or two before he went to bed, cards had been the amusement of his guests; and that Louisa, having not had resolution to forbid high play, nor even to forbear joining in it, had often seen some of her gay companions lose sums so considerable, as to change their thoughtless smiles into frowns of anguish, and had frequently stolen to his side herself, heated by the suspense, and tortured by the sorrows of a gamester.

How would he also have been distressed, had he known that creditors, clamorous creditors, awaited the wife of his heart in the metropolis; and that the pale cheek which excited his fears, and which with unabated fondness he pressed to his,

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was robbed of its bloom by the corroding consciousness of error, and the dread of impending detection!

"This last has been an expensive year," said lord Henry to his too conscious wife; "but it was our bridal year, and therefore I bless even its extravagance. I hope we shall now be allowed to live a little for ourselves: however, we must also live a little for the world:—so here, my love, is fuel for fresh follies—here is a bank note for five hundred pounds for you, to begin the season with."

Luckily for Louisa, on saying this he left the room, and witnessed not the mixed emotions which agitated and overwhelmed her, as she gazed on this unsolicited and magnificent instance of her husband's bounty, and knew how insufficient it was to obtain her more than momentary ease. She immediately, however, demanded the bills of her largest and more importunate

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creditors,—bills delivered again and again, —and resolved, faithfully, to discharge them.

While the bank-note remained on the table Trelawney entered; and finding it belonged to Louisa, and had just been given to her by her husband, he congratulated her on lord Henry's generosity, and on the means it gave her of gratifying all her propensities, however expensive.—Louisa blushed, turned the conversation immediately, and, soon after, he departed.

That evening they met at the house of a lady of quality, where, at the close of an entertainment, cards were commonly introduced; and many a thoughtless victim, confiding in the lateness of the time of night for the temptation's being of short duration, had frequently in one short hour lost more than months of œconomy have been able to replace.

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Louisa was at this place of danger without lord Henry, who was attending his duty in parliament; but his recent bounty having put it in her power to quiet some of her most urgent creditors, the sense of present and pressing embarrassments did not now excite her to play for the chance of extricating herself; and she was preparing to return home, when Mr. Trelawney entreated her not to leave the company so early, but join their party at cards.

Louisa refused for some time firmly enough, till Trelawney, on her saying she could not afford to play, reminded her of the bill which she had received that morning, and asked her, with such a purse as that how she could possibly be poor; "for," added he, "surely you have not spent it all since morning! and I conclude that you have no debts; or, if you have, surely you are too wise to pay them."

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Louisa blushed, and so guiltily, that Trelawney was convinced she *had* debts, and that the bill was already gone; and artfully exclaimed,—"Well, lady Henry, if you persist in resolving not to hazard a few guineas, on the pretence of poverty,—I must conclude that you have either extravagantly squandered in one day several hundred pounds, or that some hungry creditors have unmercifully devoured it."

Had Louisa boasted the self-respect which she once possessed, her reply would have been such as so impertinent a speech deserved. Of what importance to Trelawney was it that Louisa declined play, or that prudence or poverty had its share in her determination? But, conscious how well Trelawney had divined both her character and her real situation, and averse to confirm his suspicions by continuing to decline playing, she forced a faint smile

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at his impertinence, as she called it, and, producing a few guineas, sat down to the table.

She played; she won; and, elated by her success, and knowing lord Henry would be detained at the house to a late hour, continued to play, till, unceasingly urged on by the sneers or entreaties of Trelawney, the bill itself was produced, and nearly the whole of it lost before the party broke up.

At day-break Louisa returned home, self-abased, self-condemned: and when lord Henry came back from the house, his heart glowing with the consciousness of having done his duty to his country, his wife, instead of welcoming him with wakeful fondness, and demanding from him a detail of what had passed, was glad to feign sleep to avoid his inquiring eyes, and to conceal what was too legibly written on her countenance—that, while he

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had been scrupulously fulfilling *his* duty, she had been grossly violating hers.

The next morning the tradesmen, who had been appointed to come and receive their money, called, but in vain; and as they were departing, Trelawney appeared. He soon found out their business; and his suspicions being awakened by what passed the night before, he contrived to see Louisa's maid, a girl whom he had long known, and who made no scruple of owning to him that her mistress owed a great deal of money, and lived in daily terrors lest her lord should discover it.

"What, then," said Trelawney, "she is afraid of his violence, is she?"

"O no,—quite the contrary; but my lady loves him so dearly that she is afraid to grieve him, I fancy, and also to make him think ill of her."

"I was right, then," thought Trelawney; "and this terror and this tender

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apprehension will I turn to my own advantage."

A very few days after, the disappointed creditors renewed their demands, with the addition of some other claimants; and artfully contriving to call when, they had learnt from the servants, their master and mistress were most likely to be together, they were all delivered while lord Henry was breakfasting with his wife, who, for an instant, was gone into the next room.

"What have we here?" cried he, taking up the papers, some of which were sealed, some open:—"how is this?—bills! and some of a year's standing!—Louisa," he added, as pale as death she re-entered the room, "I thought I gave you money when we left town last year to discharge all these accounts?"

"You did so."

"Then why were they not discharged?"

Louisa answered not, but sunk almost

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fainting into a chair; while lord Henry, nearly as pale as herself, perused the bills, and found that they amounted to considerably more than two thousand pounds! What a blow to a husband who doted as he did on his wife, and who believed that she had not a fault in the world!

After a silence of considerable length, during which time lord Henry paced the room in violent agitation, while Louisa, leaning on a table, hid her face in her hands, unable to endure the sight of the agony which she occasioned, her unhappy husband with great effort said, "This is a weighty demand on me, madam, and one for which I am wholly *unprepared*;—but these debts shall be discharged as soon as I can procure the money. I have never been in the habit of making a tradesman wait for his money myself, and I will,' as far as in me lies, extricate my wife from the disgrace of being known to pursue a different line

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of conduct. In the mean while, madam, I will trouble you to lend me the bill which I gave you a few mornings ago; unless, indeed, it has been employed in the payment of other debts."

Louisa, at this moment, rendered desperate by the cold and scornful manner in which lord Henry spoke, and convinced that his good opinion was entirely lost, resolved to confess all her errors; and raising her head from her hands, she replied, "I have not the money to give you: it is all gone."

"Gone!—Was it expended in the payment of debts?"

"I intended it should be so," she answered; "and some of the tradesmen, whose bills you have just been examining, came hither by appointment the day after I received the money, to receive the amount of their debts: but,—"

"But what?" eagerly interrupted lord Henry.

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"The night before," continued she in a tone of tearless emotion, "I—I lost nearly the whole sum at cards."

Lord Henry, on hearing this, clasped his hands in agony; then exclaiming, "And she *games* too!" he rushed out of the room, and shut himself up in his own apartment.

It was then mid-day, and at seven o'clock he was to go to the house in order to resume the debate of the night before: but, alas! the noble daring of the patriot and the fire of the orator were quenched in domestic affliction; and he, on whose accents the preceding night an applauding senate had hung, and had looked up to his talents as its hope and its pride, now bowed to the earth by disappointment "where he had garnered up his soul," was now thrown across his bed, overwhelmed in the deepest anguish, and had forgotten all the ardour of the politician in the woes of the husband. At length, however, he

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made a vigorous effort, and, shaking off the selfish despondence which oppressed him, repaired to the scene of his public and now painful duty.

Louisa, meanwhile, denied to every one, and in a state of mind even more wretched than that of her husband, passed the day in her own room, a stranger both to appetite and rest. Night came, but she could not prevail on herself to go to bed; and she sat up, anxiously expecting, yet dreading, the return of her husband.

Her own maid, who was tenderly attached to her, suspecting the cause of her grief, and knowing that lord Henry had left the house without taking leave of her, resolved to sit up also, and meet him when he returned, to inform him of the state in which her lady was.—She did so, and appeared before him with so perturbed an air, that lord Henry anxiously

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and eagerly asked if any thing was the matter.

"My lady, sir," she replied, struggling with her tears,—

"What of your lady?" said he; "for God's sake, speak!"

"Only, my lord, she is very ill, I am afraid; she has been on the sofa all day, and has eaten nothing; but I could not prevail on her to go to bed till your lordship came home."

Lord Henry heaved a deep sigh, and repaired to his own apartment. "So," cried he to himself when there,—"no self-command, not the least;—her distress, and the cause, no doubt known by this time to all the servants!—But still—would not self-command have been in this case little better than an aptitude at dissembling?—Yes, yes.—O, Louisa, would that this want of self-government were *all* thy fault!—Then again, she

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could eat, she could laugh, while conscious of committing these despicable errors; but, now she is detected, she sickens and she sighs. Ah! I fear it is only the detection, not the crime, which agonizes her. And from what a dream of bliss have I been awakened! The delusion was so sweet, that the reality which now bursts upon me is more than I have fortitude to bear with composure:—but she is very, very young."—And Louisa would not have been *flattered*, had she known how often her husband found it necessary to recollect this circumstance, and how often he repeated, "she is so very, very young!"

In soliloquies and reflections like these, and in walking up and down the room, he passed the greatest part of the night; and it was quite morning before he ventured to enter the chamber of Louisa; while the reporters of the newspapers, who had been lavish in their praises of his eloquence the preceding day, were preparing to in-

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form the world that lord Henry Algernon was not as conspicuous and animated as usual in the last night's debate, and had the appearance of labouring under a severe cold.

O woman, woman! while such is your influence—while your guilt can unman a hero, palsy the firm nerves of a patriot, and rob an orator of his eloquence—how great should be your discretion, and how cautiously should you use the power which the creator of the world has given you!

When lord Henry entered Louisa's room, he found her traversing it with rapid and disordered steps: she started, and turned pale on seeing him; and then walked silently away.

"Why are you not in bed?" said he in a faltering voice; for the woe visible on her countenance had wounded him to the soul, and his heart again whispered him—"she is very, very young."

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"To bed!" replied Louisa: "I cannot sleep:—I believe," she added, holding her hand to her head, "that I shall never sleep again."

"Are you so self-condemned, then?" said lord Henry.

"That I have long been."

"And yet the reproaches of your own conscience, the dreadful pangs which, more than any thing else, are the terror of the virtuous, *those* you could *endure*,—but the dread of mine, I see, *overwhelms* you. I had rather that you had been more in awe of your own."

"Then you must wish me not to love you," she replied. "While I possessed your love and your esteem, for which alone I wish to live, even though conscious of not deserving them, I was happy:—I now feel that I have lost them, lost them through my own mad folly; for I have heard you say that you could not love, for a moment, the woman whom

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you had ceased to esteem." Here her voice failed, and she burst into tears.

"Yes, I have often said so," replied lord Henry deeply sighing: and Louisa continued, "I know it; and I know that you have resolution to act up to whatever is your sense of right:"—

"You think so!" again sighed lord Henry.

—"I therefore wish, ardently wish, that I may not long survive this moment. All I dare to ask of you is this, that you will keep my delinquency a secret from my poor father: he has often sworn that he never would forgive me, if he knew that I had ever played; and I wish, besides, to spare him the pain of knowing the unworthiness of his child, of whom he is now so proud."

"Rest assured," returned lord Henry, "that I will spare him the mournful recital: I cannot be barbarous enough to inflict such a pang on him:—alas! I feel

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only too acutely myself, the misery of being forced to think meanly of a being whom I considered as a model of every excellence.—Oh, Louisa!" he exclaimed, tears forcing their way down his manly cheek, "how happy we have been!"

All that his wretched wife had suffered before was nothing to the agony of that moment. The sight of his tears rendered her frantic: she fell at his feet, she implored his pardon; she tore her hair, she uttered convulsive sobs; till at length, worn out by the violence of her feelings, she was undressed, and laid insensible in her bed. From that state she fell into a deep, though perturbed, sleep; and when she awoke, she found that her head reclined on the arm of her husband!! I will not attempt to describe her feelings.

"It was your *first* fault," said he, kissing her pale cheek, "and I forgive you; but beware a *second*. I know that modern wives and modern husbands would

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laugh our distress on this occasion to scorn: but I look on myself as accountable to the being who gave me wealth, for the use to which I put that wealth; and cannot behold, unmoved, hundreds, nay thousands perhaps, squandered at the gaming-table, and in frivolous expenses, which might have been employed in the encouragement of virtuous industry and the arts, or in succouring indigent merit:—and, oh, Louisa! how could I bear to reflect, that this thoughtless offender was the beloved wife of my heart!"

Louisa wept, promised amendment, and, on pretence of indisposition, passed the day in her dressing-room, pondering over, and shuddering at, her past transgressions; and firmly resolving to act in future so as to regain her husband's esteem.

In the evening, lord Henry brought her money to discharge all the bills which

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he had seen, and asked her whether there were not others also to discharge. This question disconcerted her; and with a degree of infatuation which persons in debt often have when asked that question, even by those the most willing to relieve them from all their embarrassments, she answered, in a confused and hurried manner, that she believed she had still a few trifling debts, but that they were of no consequence.

True it was that she meant to be œconomical; and pay them by instalments: but, still, nothing could excuse her disingenuousness at such a moment, as her remaining debts amounted, at least, to two or three hundred pounds. Alas! she had wandered far in the path of error; and it is difficult indeed to recover the right way, even when it is kindly pointed out to us.

Lord Henry saw her embarrassment, and dared not inquire too minutely into

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the cause of it; but he felt that his confidenc in her was destroyed, too probably for ever; and the only idea that at all consoled him was, as before,—"she is so *very* young!"

The next week, there was to be a large assembly at her house; but some of the company had been invited by Louisa to stay supper, and renew afterwards the play of the evening.

This *last* part of the engagement Louisa now wished to break through; but lord Henry thought it was better that it should take place.—"It is only for once," said he, "and retracting such an invitation would perhaps expose you and me to unpleasant animadversions. No, — let them stay; and, should they press it, I would even wish you to play with them; but, after that evening, I beg that you will associate as little with that set as possible."

The party assembled: the invited few

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staid supper; played: Louisa played with them; and, contrary to her usual custom, she won a considerable sum, and chiefly from Trelawney. It would have been safer for her to have lost. Lord Henry sighed, prophetically, when he saw her success; but Louisa secretly congratulated herself on it, as she found that her winnings would go very far towards paying the debts which she had not dared to own to her husband.

Another month elapsed; and Louisa, having withstood all temptations to high play, and expense of any kind, began to feel in some degree reconciled to herself, and to hope that lord Henry beheld her with some of his usual complacency: but she could not hide from her conscious heart, that his manner was changed; that he viewed her often with a look of distrust and sorrow; and that, in their hours of retirement, he no longer talked to her on the

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important subjects which, as a public character, engrossed his mind, in a manner calculated, as his manner used to be, to convince her that he considered her as nearly his equal in the scale of creation: she had proved herself a *very woman*; and from having been the object of his highest admiration and esteem, nay, almost of his veneration, she had sunk herself into an object of pity, distrust, and reprehension. True, the faults which had occasioned this were past: but they could not be forgotten, though forgiven; and while she felt lord Henry's tenderness for her to be as ardent perhaps as ever, she could scarcely help exclaiming, "Oh! restore me, if possible, that respect and esteem which gave such value to your tenderness, and which I knew not how to prize sufficiently till I found that I had lost them."

During all this time Trelawney was an attentive observer of Louisa's conduct and

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countenance; and having learnt from her servant all that she knew on the subject of her late distress, he was convinced that, could she be led into a *second* error, the dread of being again exposed to the angry contempt of her husband would induce her, perhaps, to consent to any terms, in order to conceal her failings from him. Besides, he was now so highly esteemed by her, and her pride was so soothed by observing in his manner that respect and esteem which, from lord Henry, she was so painfully conscious of having forfeited, that her attention to Trelawney was so marked, and the softness of her address to him so encouraging, that, without being immoderately vain, he might imagine, that, could he once force her by any contrivance to be his, the object whom necessity had at first led her to favour, might soon become that of her choice.

At length, an opportunity, a fatal opportunity, offered of putting his plans in

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execution, and when Louisa was in a frame of mind, too, which did not promise to be very favourable to his purpose: for, as she happened to enter the drawing-room unobserved by her husband, who was conversing with a gentleman, she overheard him say, "So, lady D—— is at last dead, is she? So much the better; for she had long outlived the respect and esteem of her husband; and in that case a woman had better be in her grave." —"I think so, too," replied his friend: and these words were scarcely uttered, when lord Henry turned round, and beheld his wife leaning against the door, with an expression of sadness on her countenance for which he well knew how to account.

In an instant his face was covered with a conscious and almost repentant blush; and tenderly taking her hand, he told her she looked fatigued, and led her to a chair: then, turning to his companion, he

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took care by engaging him in conversation to withdraw his attention from Louisa.

It was well that he did so; for her husband's words had sunk deep into her heart.—"Ah! were I to die *now*," she thought, "conscious as he is that I have forfeited his esteem, he might regret me for his sake awhile, but not for my own!" and unable any longer to conceal her emotion, she took the first opportunity of leaving the room.

In a short time lord Henry followed her; and by the increased kindness of his manner she saw that he comprehended the exact state of her feelings; nor could she see it without a painful conviction at the same time, that he was endeavouring to satisfy her heart and his own for the consciousness he felt of her being sunk in his esteem, by every possible demonstration of yet surviving affection; and, humbled to the very soul, she had scarcely

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resolution to answer his inquiries concerning the manner in which the rest of her day was to be disposed of.

"I dine *tête-à-tête* with lady M——," she faintly answered.

"And I," answered he, "dine at the Prince of Wales's coffee-house, and shall go thence to the house, where, if the expected motion come on, I shall stay all night: but, before I go, let me give you these bills," he added —"I heard you express a wish that you could assist your poor friend Sandford with money to purchase an ensigncy for his son;—here are three hundred pounds for that purpose; give them to him, and tell him, that when his son is a general you expect to be repaid."

Louisa did not even attempt to articulate a single thank; but, throwing herself into her husband's arms, she relieved her oppressed heart by sobbing on his bosom: he then went to his appointment, and Louisa retired to dress, for hers.

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Lady M——, the friend with whom she was going to dine, had been, though she knew it not, the *chère amie* of Trelawney, and was still a convenient agent for him. She had engaged Louisa to dine *tête-à-tête* with her, in order that Trelawney might call in by accident after dinner, and that then she might pretend to be called away, and leave them alone together; and this scheme, concerted between lady M—— and Trelawney, was not at all difficult of execution.

Louisa kept her appointment, and dined with her false friend. While they were drinking coffee in the *boudoir*, Trelawney came in; and on lady M——'s expressing her surprise at seeing him, he told her that he had long threatened to come and take his revenge of her at piquet, and that now the moment was arrived.

"So much the better," replied lady M——, "as our friend lady Henry is here to see fair play."

"But it will not be very amusing to

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our fair friend to be only a looker-on," observed Trelawney.

"Indeed, you are mistaken," hastily answered Louisa: "I have abjured play myself, but I can still be interested in seeing others engaged in it: besides, I am too stupid either to entertain or be entertained this evening, and shall therefore gladly sink into a mere witness of other people's enjoyment."

While Louisa said this, Trelawney fixed his eyes on her face, and with an expression so ardent, that, for the first time, she suspected that he entertained for her sentiments warmer than those of friendship; and when she observed that he sighed frequently, did not attend to his game, but played, as lady M—— remarked, 'even worse than ever,' so that it was no pleasure to her to win every game —which she did not fail to do,—Louisa could not help looking on herself as in some measure the cause of his inattention.

He was, too, singularly eager to drink

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repeated glasses of the *chasse caffé* which stood near him; and so much did he extol its efficacy in raising the spirits, that Louisa, feeling herself unusually depressed, contrary to her usual custom, was prevailed upon to drink two glasses of *liqueur*.

After lady M—— had played several games, and won all, Trelawney declaring himself the worst player in the world, she was called out of the room, but returned immediately, in well-acted distress, to say that her steward was come up from her estate in the country to talk to her on business, and she must leave lady Henry for an hour at least; but she hoped she would stay, and allow Mr. Trelawney the honour of entertaining her till she returned.

Louisa begged to go away directly, but lady M—— would not hear of it: besides, she had not ordered her carriage till eleven o'clock, and lady M—— de-

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clared that it was not in her power to send her home in hers: she was therefore left alone with Trelawney; and for the first time in her life she *felt* that she was alone with him.

Trelawney himself allowed his countenance to express the love which he had at first willed himself to feel for this charming woman, but which now he could not have helped feeling if he would; and while Louisa averted her conscious face from his gaze, she felt the silence in which they both sat grow every moment more embarrassing: she now took up the cards, and endeavoured to rally Trelawney on his want of skill at the game of piquet.

"I never played well," replied he sighing; "and to-night it was impossible for me to attend.—Can you play?"

"Yes; and tolerably well, too: but I have forsworn cards."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Trelawney:—

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"*à-propós*—I never told you of it before, but I confess that I have accused you in my heart of *meanness*."

"Me! of meanness!"—

"Yes;—you won a large sum of money of me at your own house, and have always refused to give me a chance of winning it back again, on the stale pretence of having given over playing at cards."

"It was *not* a pretence—it was a *fact*," returned Louisa, blushing indignantly at the charge.

"But it was a well-timed fact," replied Trelawney with a sneer:—"however, I rejoice in that symptom of avarice in you;—for, when I could gaze on a woman till my very senses ache with the idea of her perfections, 'tis a relief to me to know that she has at least one fault; and this fault, sorry am I to say, I have heard lately even your friends attribute to you: to others I would not own you guilty; but, to myself, I could

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not deny that you had recently exhibited strong symptoms of loving money more than such a woman ought to do :—for instance, you left off play when you were a winner of several hundreds, and for the last six weeks you have partaken of several fine entertainments, without having given any in return."

"Mr. Trelawney!" cried Louisa, starting from her seat, trembling with indignation, for she knew how virtuous were the motives that had been so vilely traduced. But to justify herself from this charge, by owning the truth, was impossible; and she reseated herself, coldly assuring him that he was welcome to attribute her conduct to any motives he pleased.

"Nay, nay, I did not mean to *offend* you," cried Trelawney, grasping her hand and gazing passionately in her face,—"but I love to abuse you—I dare not praise you—for—would to God I had

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never seen you!" he muttered between his teeth, and, throwing her hand from him, paced the room in violent agitation.

"Mr. Trelawney," said Louisa coldly, "we had better, I believe, sit down to piquet."

"*C'est là où je l'attendois*," said Trelawney to himself—and to cards they went.

"What shall we play for?" asked Trelawney carelessly.

"The lower the better," replied Louisa; "I only want to play *pour passer le tems*."

"Oh! as you please, ma'am," replied Trelawney with an air of pique; "you are resolved, I see, that I shall not win my hundreds back again!"

"Remember, sir," returned Louisa, "that I know myself to be much the better player; therefore I need not care what the stake is."

"Nor will *I* care: therefore, as it is

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at my peril and not yours, I must beg to play high"—naming a very considerable stake.

Louisa hesitated.—True, at her own house the last night on which she had played, she had played with her husband's consent, and in his presence, at a rate as high as that which Trelawney named: however, she could not bear to be accused of meanness and avarice, though erroneously; and at last she consented to play for the sum which he mentioned, depending on lady M——'s return to break up their party, and also on her own skill to preserve her from any bad losses.

Alas! she knew not that Trelawney possessed a secret, of which though he would have scorned to make use while playing with a man, and for the sake of gain only, he had no scruple of availing himself in order to give himself a chance of possessing the woman whom

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he loved :—this secret was the art, taught him by a German juggler, of dealing himself any hand of cards which he pleased.

At first, the unsuspecting Louisa was allowed to win game after game, till the avarice of a gamester was indeed awakened in her, as she contemplated her increasing gains. But at that moment, by a trick of Trelawney's art, and when he, in seeming despair, had doubled his bets and his stakes, she lost all she had won and something more, and, rising up, declared she would play no longer.

"I thought you did not mind losing," cried Trelawney maliciously.

"Nor do I," replied Louisa, blushing, scarcely knowing what she did, and sitting down again. Trelawney drank a glass of *liqueur* : "You had better do the same," cried he : and Louisa, conscious of increasing agitation, followed his advice. The usual glass he had changed for a full-sized one, and Louisa unconsciously drank

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it. The consequence soon was, that, as she continued to play, her head grew more confused, and her feelings more irritable.

She continued to lose; and in proportion as she did so, she went on betting still higher. At length she found she had lost above a hundred pounds, and had no cash to discharge the debt, unless she made free with the money given her by her generous husband for the assistance of a distressed friend. However, it was too late to stop. Her only chance of redeeming herself was by going on.—She did, and won one game.

Trelawney was then to deal. Eager to see her cards, Louisa took up the first six before the rest were dealt. It was a sixième —Trelawney knew it.—"Now," said he, "Lady Henry, let it be double or quits." Louisa consented to the proposal, and Trelawney, having packed the cards, gave himself point, quint, and quatorze! and

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his unhappy victim had incurred a debt of near three hundred pounds to him!

The agony of that moment completely dispersed the confusion which the *liqueur* had contributed to occasion in her mind. But the extent of her danger and distress had not yet burst upon her. Trelawney saw her anguish, and artfully pretended to attribute it to fear of her husband and of his resentment.

"Fear!" she exclaimed, "fear of his resentment! Oh! that feeling were heaven to what I this moment experience. No;—'tis the bitter consciousness that I deserve to lose, and shall lose, his esteem, that hurries me to madness; that I shall appear to the man I dote upon, and to the most perfect of beings, as a creature worthy of nothing but his contempt!—Oh! if you knew that man as I know him! if you knew all that he has done for me! 'Twas but this morning that——" Here,

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unable to proceed, she threw herself on the sofa, and groaned aloud.

"But why, my dearest lady Henry, why should you expose yourself to your husband's contempt? Why need he know what has passed?"

"He must know it. Am I not in your debt, sir, and without the means of paying you, unless assisted by him?"

"Then, could you pay me without his knowledge, you would be easy?"

"Easy! Yes, as far as the reproaches of my conscience will let me be.—Easy! Yes; could I but preserve some little share of his esteem, I should be comparatively happy—but that is impossible."

"Dearest of women, it is not impossible. The means are in your power," cried Trelawney, falling at her feet, and daring to make known to her the conditions of her security from her husband's resentment.——But words would fail to give

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an adequate idea of the mute horror and surprise with which Louisa listened to his insulting and profligate proposal; and read in it the degrading idea which her weakness in one respect had led him to form of her in all.—She spoke not, she stirred not, and but for the meaning contempt and indignation expressed in her countenance, Trelawney might have doubted whether she really existed. At length, roused to exertion by the continuance of his presumptuous declarations, she rose from her seat, and, clasping her hands together, exclaimed—"Just heaven, well am I punished for my errors, by an insult like this!"

She then took from her pocket-book the notes which lord Henry had given her in the morning, and presented them to the astonished and disconcerted Trelawney.—"Take them, sir," she cried with the quickness of a desperate but determined mind; "they were destined to a different purpose, but I

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will not remain in your debt a moment: you shall give me the change when we meet again." And now looking at her watch, "I shall ring for my carriage."

In vain Trelawney knelt and expostulated. Louisa made no other reply, than that, as she found the bell did not ring, he would oblige her by calling her servants.

"It is not eleven, and they can't be come."

"It is past eleven, and they are always punctual."

"You must not, shall not go yet; I will not call your carriage."

"Then I will call it myself," she exclaimed; and before he could detain her she had reached the bottom of the stairs, and seeing her servant, in another moment she was seated in her chariot and drove from the door.

"Home!" cried the footman. "Home!"

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repeated Louisa to herself, "home! Not yet;"—and letting down the glass, she desired to be driven to the house of her apothecary.

When the carriage stopped at the door, and the servant came to receive her orders, the lamp glared on her face, and he started at sight of her pale cheek and disordered eye. "My lady," cried the man, "are you not well, my lady?"

"No: such a tooth-ache! Call Mr. Unwin immediately."

He came, bowing too low to notice the pale countenance of Louisa.

"Mr. Unwin," cried she, "I am returning home distracted with the tooth-ache:—for pity's sake, give me some laudanum directly!"

"A small bottlefull, my lady?"

"Yes, a small quantity.—But now I think of it, Mr. Unwin, I shall want to take some into the country with me, so let me have a large bottlefull at once."

"Very well, my lady, I will."

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He procured the laudanum, and gave it into the servant's hand: but though the lamp still glared on her face, he saw not the sad and desperate expression of her countenance; he saw not her parched and quivering lip; and he heard not the deep, faltering, and unusual sound of her voice. To him, she had only the tooth-ache: she said so, and he was satisfied.

How many people *look* whout seeing! Louisa in a few minutes reached home: when there, she summoned her maid to her dressing-room, and told her "that she herself should sit up till lord Henry returned, however late he might be;" but desired her to go to bed.

The servant affectionately replied, "I am sure, my lady, you are not well; therefore I beg that you will go to bed, and let me sit up." But Louisa, who was with difficulty able to keep her feelings in any bounds, in a loud tone of voice, and with a sternness wholly unusual to her, com-

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manded her "to cease her impertinence, and begone!"

The astonished servant with tears in her eyes obeyed.—Louisa looked after her as the door closed, and exclaimed, "Poor thing! I have hurt her feelings: but she will forgive me to-morrow."

She was now left alone with her own thoughts, and they were nought but wretchedness and despair—and the means of instant death were in her power. True, she felt that at nineteen it was hard, very hard to die; but all that made life valuable was gone from her for ever. She knew that she had now for ever forfeited the esteem and love of her husband; and had not lord Henry himself pronounced her doom? had he not said that morning, "that it was better for a woman to die, than survive the esteem of her husband?"

Louisa was not conscious of it; but the bitterness with which she dwelt on this observation, and the conscious blush which crimsoned the face of lord Henry

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when he saw how Louisa applied it, added a motive of resentment to other reasons urging her to suicide. To be regretted by him, to be the object of his agonized admiration, for having energy enough to punish herself for the vices which long habits of self-indulgence, rather than vicious propensities, had caused her to commit, was a prospect so dear to her, that, to realise it, life itself was not too great a sacrifice. She little knew the strong and discriminating mind of her husband; she little knew how weak in his eyes that being must appear, who imagined that one great fault could be varnished over, or atoned for, by the commission of a still greater—and one which admits of no repentance or reparation; she was not aware that suicide appeared to him no better than rank selfishness, and indolent cowardice.

But she had erred, and she could not bear to encounter the dreadful consequences of her error. The ardent attachment to her husband, which ought to have

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deterred her from evil, now only wakened in all its force, to show her the height from which she had fallen, and that her only alternative, in the very prime of youth, was misery or death!—She had never learnt to bear even the pain of trifling privations and self-denials as expiations for offences; and the same impatience of suffering, that had always hurried her into indulging every wish as it rose, now urged her to the commission of self-murder!

Sometimes, indeed, the thought of her father, and of his childless age, came across her mind, and unnerved her resolution; but then she recollected that he loved her so tenderly that he would rather follow her to her grave, than behold her languishing in mental affliction; and again with a firm hand she grasped the benumbing draught, placed it beside her, and sat down to write a farewell letter to her husband, and a few lines to Trelawney.

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To the latter she wrote thus:

"You knew me to be weak, and you basely took advantage of my weakness; and your friend lady M—— entered only too successfully into your plans.—I understand it all now;—but, despicable contrivers as you are, you failed in your worst and ultimate purpose. No; though you could lure me to the vice of play, and convert into an impoverished gamester the wife of one of the noblest of men, neither your artifices nor my fears could tempt me to purchase concealment and security from my husband's anger, by the surrender of my honour to your licentious passion. Monster! I could trample on you, for having indulged the hope even for an instant. What! am I not already too unworthy of such a husband?

"You wonder, probably, why I condescend to write to you at all—and why I write thus.—Know, then, that while I

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write, the means of self-destruction are in my reach; and you, by the error into which you and your vile agent betrayed me this evening, by luring me to the card-table, have precipitated me into an untimely grave. I cannot live, and be the object of my husband's contempt and aversion; my soul dotes on him too fondly.—Listen, then, to the words of a dying woman! Man of intrigue and passion, repent of thy iniquity: I am one of thy victims; beware how thou seekest after others. Let the remembrance of me fill thee with salutary remorse!—Out of pity to thee, and love for my husband, I will not urge him to revenge by disclosing thy treachery to him; but that my last moments may be marked by an act of mercy, the knowledge of thy crime shall die with me, and thou shalt live to think of my untimely fate, and for repentance and amendment.—

"Farewell!—I forgive thee.

"LOUISA ALGERNON."

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This note she directed to Trelawney, and then inclosed in an envelope to her own servant, desiring her to give it to Mr. Trelawney.

The letter to lord Henry was as follows:

"When you read this, best-beloved of my soul, I shall be insensible to the expressions of regret and pity which it will probably occasion you; and, alas! pity my selfishness while I own that I could better endure the consciousness of your suffering the pangs of unavailing regret, than bear to live, and be the object of your contempt and indifference. I have sinned past forgiveness. The money which you gave me to perform an act of generosity, I lost this evening at the gaming-table! I could not bear to *live*, and make this degrading confession!—and did you not yourself say, that a woman had better die than survive the esteem of her husband?

"I have only one request to make to

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you:—Continue to be a son to my poor father; desert not his childless age, as I have been forced to do; and never, never let him know, or even suspect, how I died, or the cause of my death. But I must fly from this subject. O God! with such a husband,—the delight of his friends, the pride of his country,—how happy I might have been!—While I am writing this, an applauding senate perhaps is hanging on thy words, and listening delighted to that voice which I shall never hear again! And what a welcome, what a recompense, must await thee at home!—A wife writhing under the consciousness of disgrace and error, or stretched before thee a self-murdered corpse! I cannot hesitate on which of these two horrors to make my choice. I could not endure to encounter the contemptuous glance of thine eye: therefore, farewell for ever!—O that I could once more hold thee to my heart!—But I am unworthy of such a blessing.—Be this,

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then, my only farewell!—I fly from thy justice to the mercy of my God.

"LOUISA."

Having closed this letter, having written her husband's name on it, gazed on his name for the last time, and pressed it to her pale and parched lip, she breathed an audible prayer to the Being into whose presence she was madly and impiously rushing, begging him to forgive her, to bless her husband and her father,—and then, with the quickness of desperate resolution, she put the fatal draught to her lips.

At this moment her hand was suddenly seized, and the poison dashed on the ground. She turned, and beheld her husband!—and, shrinking from his awful frown, sunk on the ground in a state of insensibility.

Though the unobservant being from whom Louisa had procured the laudanum had not beheld her as an object of

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anxious curiosity, when with a disordered mien and faltering voice she stopped to request it of him, there was an eye at that moment which read her looks with terror and suspicion;—there was a heart that had throbbed with apprehensive agony at the hollow sound of her voice, and whose prophetic fears had whispered the means of saving her from the meditated destruction.

Lord Henry, finding that the expected motion at the house would not come on that night, was returning home, when he saw his own carriage at Mr. Unwin's door; and alarmed lest Louisa should be suddenly taken ill, he approached the door, muffled up in his great coat and unperceived even by his servants, just as the lamp disclosed her pale and mournful face to the view, and as with a faltering voice, and with that motion of the lips which shows them to be parched and painful, she asked for laudanum on pre-

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tence of having the tooth-ache, and, with an expression which struck terror to his heart, desired that the bottle should be a large one.

He was too deeply read in her countenance not to know that something dreadful had happened to her; and he was now too well aware of the impetuous violence of her feelings, and of the want of deliberation of her character, not to fear that the dangerous drug was designed for a most fatal purpose;—and he was on the point of discovering himself, and accompanying her home, when it occurred to him that he had better reach home before her, desire his servant not to mention his return, and then conceal himself in Louisa's dressing-room to watch her motions; and, should his fears be just, rush out and save her from her own despair.

He had done so: he had hidden himself behind a curtain in a deep recess opposite to her writing-table; and, through

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an aperture in it which he had purposely made, he could behold all her actions, and see all her agony and irresolution ;— nor could her agony have exceeded his own, while he awaited the final event :— at length, her despair reached its climax ; he rushed out, and, overcome with a variety of dreadful emotions, his guilty and unhappy wife lost in temporary death the consciousness of her delinquency.

Lord Henry raised her from the ground, and laid her on a couch, scarcely knowing what he did, or how he ought to act. Sometimes he feared that his senses had deceived him,—that he had come too late, and she was really dead :—then he hung over her in phrensied distress ; and, calling her by a thousand endearing names, clasped her in agony to his bosom. But at length he saw her bosom heave convulsively ; and while unwonted tears burst down his manly cheeks, her

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recollection seemed on the point of returning, and he used every proper means to restore her entirely to life.

At last, when her senses were nearly restored, he, for one moment more, suffered the man and the husband to supersede the reprover and the judge; and, imprinting a long and fond kiss upon her lips, he strained her almost wildly to the heart which she had so deeply wounded: then, struggling with his feelings, his countenance re-assumed its sad severity; and when her opening eye met his, terrified at its stern reproving glance, she uttered a deep groan; and, falling at his feet, besought his pity and his pardon, by her uplifted hands and imploring eyes.

"Kneel to thy God! and not to me," replied lord Henry; "him have you most offended. Cowardly, yet daring woman! who, rather than meet the anger of a creature frail as yourself, could dare to encounter that of an omnipotent

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and impeccable Being! Are you not *terrified* at the reflection, that, but for my unexpected interference, you might at this moment have been trembling in the presence of a judge, far, far more awful than I am!—Let me raise you from that posture; mock him not with the attitude of humility, while your proud heart defies him!"

So saying, he forced her from the ground, and seated her on the sofa.

"But what dreadful crime," continued he, "can you have committed, that should have made you so wretched and so desperate?—These no doubt will inform me," he continued, taking up the letters.

"Oh! not that!—for mercy's sake do not read that!" cried Louisa, trying to seize the letter enclosed for Trelawney.

Lord Henry, with a countenance terrible in anger, and withholding the letter, replied, "This is no time for mystery and *reserve*, madam,"—and instantly

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broke the seal: the envelope fell to the ground; and he saw the name of Trelawney on the address.

"Merciful God!" cried lord Henry, "what new crime (as yet wholly unsuspected) have I still to learn!"

Louisa understood his suspicions; and for a moment she triumphed in the consciousness of innocence.

With an eager eye and a beating heart he devoured the almost illegible scrawl. "Villain! villain!" he exclaimed, when he had ended.

"I feared this!" cried Louisa, clasping her hands in anguish.

"Feared what?" interrogated lord Henry.

"That you might revenge the intended injury to your honour by—"

"By meanly sacrificing to a sense of personal injury, my duty to my country and society? No, madam, no; I will not condescend to risk my life against

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that of a villain; or, by depriving him of existence, be forced to shelter in a foreign land, and leave unfulfilled the active duties which I think it incumbent on me to fulfil in this. No. You have made me miserable; but not even you shall be the means of leading me to an action which would degrade me in my own eyes. I will set you a nobler example than you have given me: I will not rush on desperate actions to escape from wretchedness, but I will summon resolution to bear my misery with fortitude."

"But your misery," cried Louisa, "is not self-incurred; no remorse mixes with it; and therefore it is comparatively easy to bear: but mine was ——"

"The consequence of your own want of conduct; and to escape it, you dared to commit a crime still worse than the one for which you suffered.—Rash, unthinking, selfish woman! If no religious restraint withheld you, could you not be

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restrained by the dread of the anguish which you were about to inflict on your husband and your father? But no—you felt for no one but yourself; and selfishness is always the characteristic of suicide.

"This letter I perceive is addressed to me," he continued, and was going to read it instantly; but his courage failed him, and he resolved to read it alone: he therefore retired into the next room; and Louisa, glad of a moment's solitude to compose her troubled thoughts, spent the time of his short absence in a fervent address to that Being whose forgiveness she needed, and whose mercy she had experienced.

When lord Henry returned, she ventured to raise her eyes to his face; and her heart felt one solitary throb of pleasure, when she saw the trace of a tear on his cheek.

The letter had indeed beguiled him of many, but he made no comment on it. It was however easy to observe, that he con-

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tinued his just reproofs with visible effort, and that he steadily avoided looking at Louisa as he spoke.

"But we had better retire to rest now," he at length observed—"and you shall know my future will to-morrow."

"I cannot rest," exclaimed Louisa.

"Then PRAY," answered lord Henry: and taking a candle, he immediately retired to a chamber at a distance from Louisa, and left her to commune with her own miserable thoughts in solitude and silence.—Lord Henry too bathed his solitary pillow with many a bitter tear; but his resolution was taken.

The next morning he sent to invite himself to breakfast with Louisa in her dressing-room; but his servant hastening back into his chamber, with looks of alarm informed him that lady Henry was dangerously ill, and that her attendants begged him to come to her immediately.

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Lord Henry ran directly to her apartment, and found that the account of her illness was not exaggerated; and that the agonies of mind which she had endured the preceding evening, had had a fatal effect on her frame. He immediately dispatched a messenger for medical advice, and then, as kindly as if she had never offended him, took his station by her bedside, and anxiously watched beside her. Not that he owned to himself that his motives for attending by his wife's sick bed were wholly attributable to anxious unsubdued affection; on the contrary, he laboured to convince himself, that he acted thus from fear lest in her delirium she should disclose what had happened the night before, and that therefore it was proper no one but he should if possible approach her.

Nor was this precaution unnecessary: during several days of delirium, scarcely a day passed in which Louisa did not

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allude to the horrors which had overwhelmed her health and reason; and while she refused to take any thing but from the hand of her husband, she continually addressed to him the most pathetic prayers for pardon.

At length the fever subsided, and Louisa recovered, to feel as great reality of wretchedness as any which her delirious fancy had pictured. She recovered, to read, in the cold reserve of lord Henry's manner, that a severe punishment for her faults awaited her; to fear that she had indeed lost his affection for ever, and that his attentions to her had been the result of duty only. She knew not that the hand which now coldly avoided the touch of hers, had, while she was insensible of kindness, grasped her burning arm, and lingered on her rapid pulse with terrified and anxious fondness; that the arm on which she now vainly endeavoured to lean, had supported her in her unconscious

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phrensy, and clasped her with unabated tenderness; and that the lip which now breathed nothing but cold inquiries after her health, had often kindly and fondly pressed her burning temples, and addressed to heaven the prayers of agonized and apprehensive affection.

But lord Henry still persisted in his attendance on her; and lord N., whom he had constantly kept out of her sight, assured every one that "there never was such a fond husband as lord Henry; that he would suffer no one to come near his wife but himself; and that he was sure they were the fondest and happiest couple in Europe."

In the mean while lord Henry, this *happy* husband, and Louisa, this *beloved* wife, were on the eve of forming arrangements for their future way of living; which, though perfectly consistent with the former's ideas of justice, were fatal to every hope of happiness entertained by the latter.

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As soon as Louisa was able to leave her own apartment, lord Henry repeated his former request to be admitted to breakfast with her in her dressing-room; and summoning all her resolution, she received the dreaded visit.

When the almost untasted meal was removed, lord Henry addressed her thus: "Though the fear of injuring my peace has not been strong enough to prevent you from the commission of the most pernicious errors; and therefore I must consider you as loving yourself far beyond any other human being; still, I believe that you entertain for me sincere and unabated love; and that it is not the dread of what the world may think of your conduct, but what I think of it, that agonizes your heart at this moment."

"True, most true!" was her answer.

"But I feel," resumed lord Henry, "such respect for the opinion of the world, and such fear of its just censure,

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not only of myself but of my wife, that I am anxious to hide from it every part of the late horrible transaction.—Mr. Trelawney and lady M—— for their own sakes will be secret; and we for ours. Therefore we will appear to every one to live as if our union were still cemented by the best of all ties, *mutual confidence and esteem.* In private only, conscious as we are of the *barrier* that exists between us, we will live as strangers to each other."

"As strangers!" exclaimed Louisa, starting from her seat.

"I have said it," he coldly replied.

"Oh! this is worse, far worse than dying!" she cried.—"Cruel Algernon! why did you by your kind attentions endeavour to save my life?"

"That you might live for *repentance*," he answered.

"Yet, yet be *merciful* in your justice," returned Louisa.—"Send me from you! I cannot, cannot bear to live under the

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same roof with you, yet find myself an alien to your affections!"

"What! were the world's censure a matter of indifference to you, could you bear to break your father's heart, by the knowledge of our wretchedness, and your fatal errors? If *you* are cruel enough to disregard the consciousness of his misery, *I* am not.—Kind, good old man! I will not convert thy parental pride into shame and repining.—No: as far as depends on me, thou shalt go down to thy grave glorying in thy daughter."

"My lord," cried Louisa, "I am resigned to my fate; let me be the only sufferer."

"The only sufferer!" returned lord Henry. "Oh! Louisa,——" A long pause ensued. At length lord Henry said, "I have well considered this unhappy business, and I am convinced that it will be proper for the world to think you still the object of my love and adoration."

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"And do you mention the world's delusion as means of consolation to me?"

"No, madam, I do not wish you to be soon consoled—I wish you to undergo salutary suffering for your faults, and to be amended by dint of trials. No. I shall on principle be pleased to know, that while an admiring world looks up to you as its idol, the flattered idol abroad is a wretch at home. The hour of unconditional pardon and pernicious indulgence is past. I cannot take to my bosom a wife so weak and criminal; for your projected suicide, instead of raising you in my eyes, has sunk you still lower. As a christian I forgive you, but as a husband I disclaim you!—(Here his voice faltered.)—I have one thing more to say—I demand a full and true account of all your debts; and when they are paid, the allowance which I shall give you shall be so ample, as to preclude all tempta-

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tion to run in debt again; at least, none but what habit, so often powerful over reason, shall hold out. I think, I am sure, you will never play again."

"Bless you, bless you for that!" cried Louisa, bursting into tears; and lord Henry hastily quitted the room.

In every thing lord Henry's plan was punctually put in execution. As soon as he had paid all her bills, he gave her the first quarter's allowance of a most bountiful yearly stipend. He even paid her infinitely more attention in public than she ever received from him before; while the deceived lord N—— was often heard to exclaim, with tears in his eyes, "Lord and lady Henry are a pattern for married people!"

Luckily for him, he saw not the interior of their family; he beheld them not in their hours of retirement; he knew not that it was now so painful to them to be alone together, that lord Henry was glad

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to invite a widowed sister to take up her abode with them.

Lady Anne came, and was not slow to discover the marked contrast between her brother's manner to his wife in public, and in private; nor was it long before the affectionate earnestness of her inquiries drew from Louisa a confession, that her own imprudencies had weaned from her the affections of her husband.—"But, guilty as I am," cried she, "I did not think he could so completely have thrown me from his heart."

"Oh, do not believe that he has done so, my dear sister: you are now only undergoing a probation. When he thinks you have expiated your past errors by a life of self-denial and virtue, he will forgive you, and love you as tenderly as ever."—"Alas!" replied Louisa, "when I have gone through my probation, and even with honour to myself, it is but too probable that there will be no love remain-

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ing in his heart, to reward me for all I have endured. Nothing in this life is stationary, no not even affection. If it does not increase, it must unavoidably diminish; and never, never to relax in the coldness of his manner in private, proves, indeed it does, that his heart is for ever lost to me!"

The kind lady Anne could only weep, and pity her; for she looked up to her brother as to a superior being, and could not blame any measure which he thought proper to pursue. But Louisa, whose feelings were wounded to the quick by the consciousness that lord Henry loved her no longer, though well convinced that she had deserved to lose it, sometimes proudly resolved to hide within her heart the misery which she felt, and not allow him to suspect the anguish which she endured. But the next moment she declared that he should see her the hopeless wretch that he had

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made her, and the whole world should know her sufferings, and learn to pity while it condemned her. But then she recollected lord Henry's desire, that what had passed might be kept secret from every one: and with a desperate sort of resignation she vowed he should be obeyed. She therefore took care to be continually in company; and observing that the agony of her mind had impaired the mantling bloom of her cheek, she repaired its ravages by art, and so skilfully that lord Henry, not suspecting the deception, and seeing his wife shining with unabated beauty, concluded that she felt but little; and mourned in secret over her want of proper sensibility.

Thus, unfortunately, while only seeking to deceive the world, she also deceived her husband, and estranged his heart still further from her. But in this instance, lord Henry, in wishing her to

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act a part before the eyes of the public, was as culpable as she was; and they added one more to the many instances, that openness and sincerity are always more conducive to happiness than disguise and duplicity.

Sometimes overwhelmed and humbled by the consciousness of her husband's superiority, Louisa resolved carefully to examine whether that superiority was as real as her youthful enthusiasm had imagined it to be; and she endeavoured, in the gay and often accomplished group of young men who surrounded her, to find some counterbalance to the sense of his oppressive worth. And while they praised her talents, and paid respectful homage to her charms, she endeavoured to look on her youth as an excuse for her errors, and to consider lord Henry as a severe and merciless judge.

One evening, flattered and followed,

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she had succeeded in lulling her remorse to sleep, and had begun to believe that the homage of the admiring group around her was nearly as valuable as the esteem of her husband; and that a foolish partiality alone had made her believe in the exclusive excellence of lord Henry; when lord Henry himself entered.——Instantly, as Delphine says, she saw "*les nuances de l'affectation sortir.*". The lively appeared flippant; the relater of stories, a mere *twaddler* (to use a well known phrase); the sententious observer, affected and pedantic; the pleasant satirist, an unprincipled defamer; and the man of wit, a conceited coxcomb.

There was an unpretending simplicity and good sense in lord Henry Algernon; a dignified composure of manner, and a modesty not at all inconsistent with manliness; which was so sure a pledge, that though every sentence he uttered beamed

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with mind, he was wholly unconscious of shining, and meant not to shine, that Louisa hated herself for having even wished to degrade him to her own level; and retired to her chamber, when the glittering crowd was gone, more miserable, more self-condemned, more provoked at, yet more in love with, and proud of her husband, than ever.—"And this is the man whom I have presumed to afflict!" she cried; "this is the man from whom I have eternally separated myself!" The thought was agony, and the morning found her unrefreshed by sleep.

More than a year had now elapsed since Louisa's last conversation with her husband in her dressing-room. But though art could hide the decay of her bloom, it could not disguise the ravages which secret sorrow made in her form. That roundness of contour, which made her figure so beautiful, was now lost; and her fallen

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cheek proclaimed that some sure but secret cause was mining her health away.

Lord N—— was amongst the first to observe this, and he was fortunate enough to attribute this appearance to a very welcome cause. He had long wished to see an heir to his estates and lord Henry's, and he now was convinced that this happy moment was approaching. Nor was it long before the delighted old man ventured to hint his feelings on the subject to lord Henry himself.

"So, my lord Henry!" cried he, leaning on the head of his cane, and looking very archly up in his face—"So!—When family secrets can no longer be concealed, I suppose then I am to be made acquainted with them!"

"Secrets, my lord!" cried lord Henry, starting from his chair—

"Yes, sir; and I do think it was very unkind in you to keep me in ignorance."

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"My lord," exclaimed lord Henry, "you alarm and distress me beyond measure. What is known?—what ought I to have revealed to you?"

"What you must know it would give me the greatest pleasure to hear."

Lord Henry started, and went back to his seat.

"All is safe," he said to himself; "for what I have to tell, a father could not have pleasure to hear."

"Come come, Henry, away with these reserves," continued lord N——, "and let me congratulate you and myself on the happy prospect of an heir to both our families."

Lord Henry again started from his seat —"This is too much," he exclaimed— "Who has been sporting thus with your lordship's credulity?"

Lord N—— looked aghast—"My

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credulity! Let me tell you, sir, no one should presume to sport with that."

"I beg your pardon, my lord, but indeed you are misinformed."

"I tell you I can't be misinformed—for I have not been informed at all:—my eyes were my informants—and so they are other people's."

Lord Henry for a minute stood gazing on him with horror;—but, recollecting himself, he said: "My lord, it is a mistake; it is not as you imagine."

"Well, sir," replied lord N—— pettishly, "you shall have it as you please; but if Louisa is not in a family way, what is the reason of her ill looks? Answer me that."

"Her ill looks! I did not know that she *did* look ill."

"No!—Why, she is a mere shadow, sir; and as she has no apparent indisposition, it is natural, you know, that one should

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attribute it to a certain and very desirable cause. But if you are sure of what you affirm, Henry, why, then, why, then, the Lord have mercy on my poor child, for she must be in a consumption!"

So saying, with his handkerchief at his eyes he left the room, leaving lord Henry resolved to watch Louisa's looks, and hoping to find that her father's fears were as ill founded as his hopes had been.

But again Louisa met his eyes in the evening, as blooming and as animated as ever. True, she was thin, very thin: but dissipation and late hours might sufficiently account for that; and sighing over her want of stability of feeling, he continued to think that his domestic happiness was destroyed for ever.

In the mean while, lord N—— was resolved to discover by all means in his power, how far his hopes were really ill-founded; and for this purpose he interrogated Louisa's confidential servant.

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"Oh dear, no, my lord—certainly not, my lord," was the answer.

"So, all positive people in this house, I find: but then, if this be not the case, why does your lady look so ill?"

"My poor dear lady! Oh, my lord, I assure you I don't wonder at my lady's ill looks at all, for indeed she never gets a wink of sleep without laudanum. She walks about her room, sometimes all the night long—and so she has done many months."

Lord N—— was stupefied with surprise.——"And what does her husband mean by suffering it? Why does he not forbid it? A fine fancy, indeed!"

"Dear me, sir! my lord does not *know* it."

"No!—He must sleep astonishingly sound then."

"Oh dear me, my lord! my lord sleeps at one end of the house, and my lady at the other."

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"So, so!" muttered lord N——, after a pause of indignant and perturbed astonishment. "But I will know the meaning of this before I sleep," he exclaimed; and went in search of lord Henry.

On meeting with him, "I have seen my daughter's woman, lord Henry, since we last conversed," said lord N——, "and I have heard strange things:—But whatever be the cause of the separation between you and Louisa, I trust that her infidelity is not the cause of it!"

Lord Henry did not answer; he only bowed his head in assent.

"Sir, if I thought it *was*," cried the old man, "she should answer for her crime to *me*, sir. I would, yes, sir, I would forget, if possible, that she was my only child, my only joy on earth, sir! es, sir, I have a Roman spirit, sir!" Here he burst into tears; and lord Henry, much moved, solemnly assured him that he

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believed his wife's honour to be without spot or blemish.

"Thank you, sir, thank you!" replied lord N——; "but I knew it could not be otherwise. But then, wherefore is it that you never meet but in public?"

Lord Henry did not answer.

"My lord Henry Algernon, you seem one of the most moral of men; yet there are hypocrites in the world, and I am almost tempted to believe that you are one. It is very strange, very strange, upon my soul!"

Still lord Henry was silent.

"Your fair-seeming men," continued lord N——, "are sometimes very ill-acting ones, I know, and——"

Lord Henry now prepared to leave the room.

"Stop, stop, sir!"—angrily—"one question once for all:—Do you, do you—have you another attachment, sir?"

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"No, sir,"—coldly replied lord Henry, and left him.

Lord N——, greatly enraged, vowed not to rest till he brought Louisa to a confession, however; and on going to her apartment he found her alone.

On seeing him, she affected great gaiety, and begged him to be seated; but when he entered, (he had heard her singing in an under and broken voice a very mournful air, and to words expressive of regret for past happiness,)

"It will not do—it will not do, lady Henry," said lord N—— mournfully:—"these skipping spirits can no longer impose on me—they are not natural—nor more, I protest, now I look at it, is your fine colour! Oh, Louisa! I see it, I see very clearly, you are dying of a broken heart!"

Here tears choked him; and Louisa, throwing herself on his neck, and joining

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her tears to his, declared she was quite well, and that his suspicions were wholly unfounded.

"It will not do—I am not to be imposed on so—Your husband—"

"Is one of the best of men."

"And of husbands, I suppose?"

"Yes, of husbands."

"And you, therefore, are the happiest of wives?"

To this home question Louisa could not answer; but her lip quivering, and her eyes filling with tears, she turned to the window, unable to speak.

"Seek not to deceive me, my dear child," continued lord N——; "I know the terms on which you live with your husband, and therefore I know, that though you both keep a fair appearance to the world, something dreadful must have passed between you.—Have you not quarrelled?"

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"No."

"No?—Perhaps some foolish difference of opinion, not conducted with temper, brought on irritating language, and neither of you has, as yet, chosen to make concessions? Perhaps you ventured to disagree with your husband on politics; and you know, child, he is very tenacious of his opinion on those subjects."

"Indeed, my dear father, I should never have thought of disputing with lord Henry on any subject, much less on one on which he must be so much better informed than myself."

"Then what is the cause of your disunion? Answer me that."

"I cannot."

"Are you jealous? Do you suspect your husband of an attachment to any other woman?"

"Oh, no, no."

"Do you think he has ceased to love you?"

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"I fear he has."

"Indeed! Listen to me, my child—I see very clearly that, whatever be the cause, you are not happy; and that your life may be the sacrifice of this strange and mysterious grief.—Lord Henry is as mysterious as you are.—But mark me—if he cannot or will not make you happy, why, I *must*; and I shall insist on a perfect reconciliation taking place between you, or that you return to your father. On this I am determined, and I leave you to meditate on what I have said."

"Then, there is but one thing to be done," said Louisa to herself: "I must ask lord Henry's leave to declare my culpability to my father, as I cannot bear to see my husband for one moment an object of suspicion or anger to him. No: let me only be blamed, since I alone am guilty."

She then, before she entered her car-

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riage, which was to convey her to an assembly, wrote the following note:—

"I conjure you to allow me to disclose our sad secret to my father; justice demands it of me. I can bear his anger, however violent, better than the consciousness that he blames you, though I alone am guilty."

Lord Henry read this note as he was dressing for the same party to which Louisa was already gone; and he read it again and again: it was the first instance of confidential intercourse that they had had since their separation. "There is some feeling in this request," said he to himself; "but then her feelings so soon evaporate!" and with a deep sigh he carefully put the note in his pocket-book, and went to the party.

It was both crowded and brilliant: but lord Henry's eyes looked only for Louisa. He wished to see on her countenance traits of the sensibility which dictated her

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note. He saw her as blooming and animated as ever. "Ah! I see her character will never improve—there is no chance for our ever being happy again!" sighed lord Henry; though he could not help owning that she was very thin indeed.

At this moment lord Henry observed an elderly gentleman, of a very intelligent countenance, contemplating Louisa with a great deal of interest, and he felt a desire of knowing, what he dared not ask to know; namely, what, physiognomically, he thought of her face; when, to his great satisfaction, the gentleman addressed him, and said, "You, sir, I perceive, like myself, have been looking for some time at that very beautiful and interesting woman."

"I have, sir: it is a countenance to dwell upon—is it not?"

"It is, indeed, sir," replied the gentleman, "but with very painful interest."

"Sir!" cried lord Henry—

"What, sir!" replied the other, "do

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you not see that her gaiety is all assumed; and that under those smiles and that bustling vivacity she hides an aching heart?"

"You are a very acute examiner, I see, sir," replied lord Henry with some degree of pique. "I see no such thing."

"No!"

"No, sir:—a woman pining in secret would not have such a bloom as that."

"Bloom as that!—Such a bloom is to be bought any where, believe me."

"Sir, let me assure you, lady Henry Algernon's colour is perfectly natural. I know it, sir—be assured I do."

"Well, sir, I shall not dispute the matter, especially as you may be a friend or relation of the lady's; but if that bloom be not art, I fear it is the blush of consumption."

Lord Henry started and turned pale: but the stranger, not regarding it, went on thus:—"I confess I never felt so deep an

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interest in any one whom I do not know, as I do in that lady; because it was but yesterday that I heard an anecdote of her which does honour to her heart; and, sir, if you know her, it will give you pleasure to hear it too."

"I am all attention, sir," replied lord Henry.

"A friend of mine, Mr. Sandford, a man reduced from opulence to comparative poverty, has been for some time desirous of purchasing a commission for his son, but has not been able to raise the money: but about three months ago, lady Henry Algernon, who has long known him, sent him three hundred pounds towards it, to be repaid when his son is a general. But what pleases me more than the gift itself is, that she sent it in the name of her husband, and gave him the whole credit of the action, when it is very certain that he has no acquaintance with Mr. Sandford: and besides, lady

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Henry is known to be very capable of concealing her bounties under the name of another."

Lord Henry during this recital felt a glow of pleasure at his heart which he had not experienced for months; but it was not unalloyed. Ample as was his allowance to his wife, he feared that, in order to give away the three hundred pounds which, as a punishment for her fault, he had purposely omitted to send (according to his original intention), she had incurred debts to that amount; and therefore he dared not give way to the feelings of approbation and affection which, spite of himself, forced the tears into his eyes, and for a moment made him incapable of replying to the stranger's observation.

When he had concluded his story—"Now, sir," said the stranger, "does not such a woman deserve to be happy?"

"Yes, sir;—and happy she will be, if she be not so already," replied lord

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Henry: "but let me assure you, that to my certain knowledge lord Henry knew nothing of this gift to Mr. Sandford."

"He is," resumed the stranger, "one of the first of men; and it is strange his wife should not be the happiest of women."

"I doubt you over-value him, sir," replied lord Henry, sighing; "he has many faults, and——"

"My lord!" said the stranger, politely bowing, "my suspicions are now confirmed: I am convinced that I have the honour of talking to lord Henry Algernon himself; for no one else could have accused him of error." Then, begging lord Henry to pardon the freedom of his remarks on Louisa, he bowed and disappeared.

Immediately after, eager to have his suspicions removed, lord Henry followed Louisa into an adjoining apartment, whither he saw her retire.

"Lady Henry," cried he, in a voice

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less assured than he wished it to be, "allow me to speak a few words to you:—our opportunities for talking, and on business, are so few, that I must seize them whenever they offer."

"My time," replied Louisa coldly, "is always at your lordship's disposal."

"I wish to ask, lady Henry, whether—whether you are in want of money? as, if you are, I beg you to draw on me for whatever sum you choose."

"Your generosity to me, sir," answered Louisa, "is so great, that your present offer seems to me almost like a reproach. It is therefore with great pleasure that I assure you, I have nearly a quarter's allowance untouched, and have not a single debt in the world."

Had she ended here, all would have been well; but feeling herself on the point of bursting into tears as she uttered the word debt, she assumed a gay unconcern of manner, and added—"No, sir: instead

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of wanting money of you, I am sufficiently *en fonds* to be able to lend money to you."

"Pshaw!" muttered lord Henry.—She was wrong; on such a subject as this, levity was for ever forbidden her: but at this moment it was unpropitious indeed; and her disappointed husband was on the point of turning away from her, when he recollected the stranger's remark, and feared that her life was in danger. That idea banished all resentment; and hearing her carriage announced, "Shall I have the honour of leading you to your coach?" said he.—Louisa thrilled with joy as he took her willing hand, and held it with rather an eager grasp; when a young man of ton, coming hastily up, rallied her on the vulgarity of allowing her husband to be her beau; and, forcing her hand from lord Henry's, led her down the stairs.

"Pshaw!" said lord Henry a second

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time, but with less pain than the time before; and he retired to bed that night less unhappy than usual.

Louisa was indeed amended: she had nobly discharged her duty to him and herself in the affair of Sandford; and she had done it *secretly* too, and with no view to obtain his applause. She had also no doubt made personal sacrifices to save the money for that purpose: and she had assured him she had not a debt in the world!

Still, he was sure that, having learnt to stand in awe of him as a judge, she had ceased to love him as a husband; and he feared that she secretly sighed to be united to some younger man, who would have viewed her foibles with more indulgence and sympathy: nay, he thought that he had been a very rigid judge, especially as *she was so very, very young*.

In these painful cogitations he passed the night; and rose in the morning so full of terror for Louisa's health, that he went

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in search of his sister immediately, in order to interrogate her concerning it.

He found lady Anne alone; and his first question was, "Do you think lady Henry in bad health?"

"I think her in a very bad way indeed," replied lady Anne: "she neither eats nor sleeps, and is shrunk in a most alarming manner."

"Good God! is it really so?—and what is the cause?"

"Oh, brother!" cried lady Anne, bursting into tears, "you are the cause. She thinks she has entirely lost your affection, and she pines in secret sorrow."

"Secret, indeed!" cried lord Henry, "for do I not see her in company the gayest of the gay?"

"All acting—and sometimes indeed her spirits are the effect of laudanum."

"Laudanum!" echoed lord Henry, shuddering as certain recollections passed across his mind: but are you *sure* of this?"

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"Quite sure:—not that my sister ever *blames* your indifference to her; on the contrary, she only blames *herself*, and thinks your conduct just, though severe. But she loves you so tenderly——"

"Loves me! Impossible! If so, why does she not let me see how bitterly she feels our separation?"

"That is easily answered. In private you scarcely ever see her, except in presence of lord N——; and in public, by trying to conceal from every eye her sufferings and disgrace, she only acts in obedience to your commands."

"True, my dear consoling sister," cried lord Henry, pressing her to his heart: "still, I cannot believe in the strength, or rather in the durability, of her feelings."

"You have been separated more than a twelvemonth; and during that time your wife has been, in *secret*, a prey to the most corroding anguish."

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"Give me proofs of this: I have never seen her but the idol of the crowd, and with unimpaired bloom and gaiety."

"Bloom!—Her cheek, when she is not made up for company to hide her real situation, is pale as death!"

"What do you tell me?"

"The truth.—— She is now, I dare say, just risen;—go to her dressing-room, and you will see her as she is."

"I—I dare not.—Yet, after so long a probation of her penitence, and such proofs of her amendment as I received last night—" (Here he related his conversation with the stranger.)

"Very well, sir," said lady Anne; "please to recollect that she never expected you would know of the action which you so justly admire; therefore it could have proceeded from virtue merely."

"True—true—dear sister."

"But defer, if you *please*, the moment

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of reconciliation till it is too late to *save* your *victim*—and till your forgiveness finds her on her death-bed."

"Cruel lady Anne!"

"Cruel, only to be *kind*, brother:—I am *sure* you love your wife."

"Love her!—Yes; *I* too have had *my* sleepless nights and anxious days: but I thought I was doing my duty."

"Do it now, then:—go and see the ravages which sorrow has made."

"I dread the sight; but I will go." So saying, he rushed out of the room, and did not allow himself to stop till he reached the door of Louisa's dressing-room. It was half open, and she was sitting just as she had left her room; with her hair dishevelled, her cheek pale, her eyes sunk in her head, and her whole appearance bespeaking the anguish of her heart. Her breakfast, untouched, stood before her: and she whom lord Henry saw the night before, gayest of the gay, and most blooming of the beautiful, he now beheld as she

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really was,—a hopeless wretch in the very prime of life and expectation!

She held a picture in her hand, which he soon saw was a picture of himself; and she was so engrossed in contemplating it, that he approached her unobserved.

"This, at least, looks kindly on me," she said, kissing it as she spoke; "my errors have not changed *that*."

Lord Henry, on hearing these words, felt assured that the supposed loss of his affection was indeed the cause of her sorrow; and in his emotion he moved his hand to his eyes so rapidly that Louisa heard a noise, and said, without turning her head, "Is it you, Ellis?—Take away my breakfast; I can't eat it." Then, hastily concealing the picture in her bosom, she leaned her arm on the table, and sat (tears stealing down her cheeks) the image of silent woe.

After some minutes, thinking herself alone, she suddenly arose, and exclaimed, "Yes, Algernon, this state of misery can-

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not last long; and when I am in my grave, you shall know the deep sorrow and true penitence of my heart; and that, at least, though I had madly forfeited my *right* to your tenderness, I could not endure the loss of it, and live!" As she said this, she turned round and beheld her husband; and would have fallen, overcome with surprise and emotion, had he not caught her in his arms.

"Louisa!" cried he, fondly clasping her faded form to his bosom, "your probation and my misery are, from this moment, over; and let them, if possible, be for ever forgotten!"

A few hours after, lord N——, having resolved to insist on Louisa's removing to his house, being convinced that lord Henry, though why he knew not, was unworthy of his daughter, arrived at the door with his travelling equipage, to put his intentions in execution.

As he drew near the dressing-room he heard the sound of music, and sighed

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when he recollected how very mournful the air was which she had been playing when he visited her before. "Ah, poor thing! there she is at that mournful work again!" thought lord N——. But as he came nearer he heard a lively Italian song, and was convinced it could not be Louisa singing. That song was however immediately succeeded by one written and composed by her, and greatly admired by lord Henry in his days of courtship. The song was as follows :

Why bid my trembling lips explain
The faithful love in which I pine ?
Oh ! ask not words, for words were vain,
But read my eyes when fixt on thine.

Yet should this timid, conscious eye,
Bent on the earth, refuse to speak,—
Then, Henry, mark when thou art nigh
The *tell-tale blush* that paints my cheek.

"This is very strange," thought lord N——; "but now I am sure it is Louisa singing:" and as soon as the song was ended, the wondering and impatient old

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man threw open the door, and saw his daughter at the instrument, and lord Henry sitting by her, his arm fondly encircling her waist; while the delighted lady Anne contemplated in glad silence the happy change which she had helped to effect.

They rose at his entrance; and while he stood motionless with surprise at the door, they eagerly approached him, and lord Henry begged him once more to bless their union.

"You are strange people," cried the peer, brushing a tear from his eye.—"John, (to the footman,) tell my fellows, they may go home again."

"No—let them stay where they are," replied lord Henry.

"How! do you know that I am come to run away with your wife?"

"Yes, and so you shall—on condition that you run away with me too. We will all escape, for a short time, to the comfort

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of rural retirement. Louisa wants country air and a little nursing, and I am to be head nurse. My lord, your daughter and I have both been to blame, and ——"

"O no, no, no, believe him not," cried Louisa, throwing herself into his arms: "I only have been in fault."

"May be so," interrupted lord N——, with a degree of parental pique in his manner; "but whatever may have been your fault, I would not change my daughter for any other daughter in Christendom!"

"Nor I my wife," exclaimed lord Henry.

"Give me your hand," said lord N——, softened by this speech, "and be assured that I would not exchange the honour of calling lord Henry Algernon son-in-law, for that of being father to any duke in Europe—only, I repeat it, you are strange people. Yesterday, there was Louisa whining out a melancholy ditty

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as long, and as dismal, as I found your face, lord Henry; and today I find her carolling merry and tender strains by the side of her husband, who is smirking like an old maid on an offer of marriage. Such changes! They prove that——"

"That life is an April day," observed lady Anne, "alternate rain and sunshine."

"The *married* life more especially," interrupted lord N——.

"Perhaps so," said lady Anne. "And at last comes the dreadful moment of eternal separation! Oh! wise have that couple been, who have made preparations of fortitude against that hour, by having lived together in such a manner that the pang of parting is not rendered more keen by remorse; and by the dreadful consciousness, that, to the lost partner of their existence, life has been often rendered burthensome by foolish contradictions, unkind refusals, and mortifying and irritating language. 'Tis sweet, 'tis consoling," continued lady

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Anne, no unpleasing tear stealing down her cheek as she spoke, "to reflect, that, as far as it was in our power, the lost sharer of our heart knew no cares that we could prevent, and no happiness that we did not endeavour to increase."

"We will live so in *future*, Louisa," cried lord Henry, "that when we die—"

"Pshaw!" cried lord N——, "you should never talk of dying before an old man:—come, let us be off for the country, and give all dismals to the air!"

They obeyed: and the cares then banished, the errors then repented of, never returned to molest them again; nor was lord N—— deceived, when, at any subsequent period of his life, he repeated his declaration,—"that lord and lady Henry were the happiest couple in Christendom! and a pattern for all married people!"

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THE

ROBBER.

MR. Sedley, a merchant of great respectability and considerable property, returned one evening rather late to his country-house with a large sum of money in his pocket; the whole amount of a subscription which he had just received at a meeting of justices, in order to carry on some improvements in a house of industry near his own country seat.

Mr. Sedley had a servant with him, but by some accident or other he was not in sight; when a man sprung from a hedge, and, knocking Mr. S—— off his horse with a bludgeon, prepared to rifle him.

He had already seized one pocket-book, and was searching for another, when

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Mr. Sedley recovered from the effects of the blow, and began to struggle with the villain; and having in his hand a small cane with a knife in it, he contrived to touch the spring, and the robber saw with apprehension the advantage which it gave his antagonist.—It was a moment of desperation! He wrested it from Mr. Sedley's grasp, and was on the point of plunging it in his bosom, when the latter made a violent effort, struck aside the ruffian's hand, and, grappling with him, they rolled together on the ground.

At this moment the servant galloped up to them, and hastened to rescue his master from the nervous grasp of his assailant.

"Hold him fast," cried Mr. Sedley, as Allen, his servant, seized the robber by the collar, "and bring him along with me to the nearest magistrate."

At this instant, the moon shone from

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behind a cloud; and the light falling on the robber's face, Mr. Sedley saw that he was very young; and also saw, with a feeling of painful compassion, that his cheek was colourless, his lip pale and quivering, and that his countenance was that of a being to whom hope was for ever lost.

"What—what could tempt you to commit this outrage?" said Mr. Sedley in no angry tone.

"A fiend in woman's shape," replied the man.

"Did you know that I was to pass this way?—was I the object of your attempt?"

"You were—it was known why the justices were to meet, and and that you were to be the treasurer."

"And who was your accomplice?"

"I had none."

"I mean, what woman tempted you?"

"She shall live for repentance—one

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victim to justice is enough—I shall not name her."

"What—not if it should be the means of saving your life?" asked Allen pertly.

"No," replied the robber, with a look of contempt. "I can endure to die, but not to have the death of another on my conscience."

"An excellent joke that, f'aith!" cried Allen, "when you just now attempted the life of my master."

"Do you see no difference in the one case and the other?" asked the robber.

"Not I, really."

"Your master struggled with me—he endangered my life, and I assailed his. I am guilty, and I deserve punishment—But does it follow, that in cool blood, and to prolong my miserable existence, I should sacrifice the life of another?"

"Why, upon my honour, I can't say that I should be very willing to trust you, after that, with the life of another."

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"Peace!" cried Mr. Sedley; and in silence they proceeded till they came to two cross-roads. Mr. Sedley turned to the left.

"The justice, you know, sir, lives to the right," observed Allen.

"But I live to the left," coldly replied Mr. Sedley.

"Dear me! are we going home, sir?" asked Allen.

"Silence!" replied Mr. Sedley: and in silence they reached his habitation. He took the robber by the arm, who made no efforts to escape; and, desiring Allen to follow them, led them into his study.

There was something in the robber's manner and sentiments that surprised and pleased Mr. Sedley. He thought that he must be a man of abilities; and that it was a hard thing, for such a man to die an untimely death, as he would do, if tried, for, perhaps, a first offence.

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Mr. Sedley was one of the few (would they were the many!) who think, that, excellent as our laws are in other respects, our criminal code wants revision; who think that death is a punishment too severe for any crime short of deliberate murder; and who feel as men should feel for the frailties of their fellow-creatures, and are conscious, deeply conscious, that it is an awful thing to deprive a human being of that life which his Creator has breathed into him. And the moment was now arrived for Mr. Sedley to put the sincerity with which he professed these opinions to the proof.

"Search him," said he to Allen.

He obeyed; and found one of Mr. Sedley's pocket-books upon him. "Here, here, sir; here is evidence that must hang him for felony!" cried Allen (who had picked up a little law-knowledge while acting as clerk and valet to a counsellor on his circuit). "As to mur-

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der, I doubt you cannot indict him for that."

"For murder!" cried the robber, starting.—"True, I was very near committing it:" and he seemed to shudder with horror.

In his other pocket were pistols.

"You see, sir, murderous intention proved," said Allen.

"Silence!" cried Mr. Sedley; and again he sunk into a reverie, from which he was roused by the increasing agitation of the robber; who, after giving way to the most convulsive sobs of agony, suddenly burst into tears, and fell at Mr. Sedley's feet.

"Pardon me, and let me go!" cried he. "I abhor my crime, and its instigator; and never, never will I be guilty of the like again. But 'tis not on my own account that I implore mercy—no: all my prospects in life this wicked action has

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blasted, and I can never know comfort more, for I can never respect myself: but I have a mother; and I am her only child—her all; and were she to know my crime, she would die—she would indeed. Oh, for God's sake!—show mercy to me, and save me from the additional guilt of parricide! My mother!—my poor dear mother!" Here, suffocated with his sobs, he sunk on the floor, and even Allen was moved.

"Inconsistent being!" replied Mr. Sedley, "so properly considerate now of the feelings of your own mother, so regardless of the feelings of the mother of another! *I* too have a mother: yet, regardless of what pain you might inflict on my parents and friends, you were going to murder me!"

"I was,—I was,—but not in cold blood: if you give me up to the law, you do it from reflection, not impulse."

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"Who are you?—what are you, thou strange mass of contradictions?" replied Mr. Sedley.

"My name is Theodore—I have no other name now; at least I will not disgrace my family by owning it. I have been well educated; but my father died insolvent, and my mother and I, but for my industry, would have come to want. All went well with us till I became acquainted with an angel in beauty, but a fiend in disposition. I loved her, as I fancied, to distraction; but I now find that I mistook passion for sentiment. However, I was not rich enough to maintain her, and she threatened to leave me and live with another man, unless I could procure her a certain sum necessary to pay her debts. This made me desperate: I promised to procure it!—and she informed me, that she had heard, on such an evening you would receive that sum, and probably return home unattended. You

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know the rest. Thank God, you are safe! and I have at least learnt to despise the wretch who led me on to ruin. And oh, sir! take compassion, I conjure you, on my unhappy mother!"

Mr. Sedley was embarrassed—he was agitated; he wished to do right, yet feared to do wrong: he feared to be blamed by others if he let Theodore escape unpunished; he feared to be blamed by his own conscience if he delivered him up to justice. If he did the latter, he knew he would undoubtedly be condemned to death; and that idea was so insupportable that at length he resolved to pardon him,—and he addressed him thus:

"Were the punishment that awaits you, misguided young man, any thing less than death, I should this moment order you to be committed for trial; but your words and your looks carry a sort of conviction to my mind, that you are a sincere penitent; and then—and then—" added

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Mr. Sedley, tears choking his voice, "I can't help thinking of your poor mother, and her agonies. Therefore, conjuring you, as you value your mother's peace and your own immortal soul, to forsake your vile companion, and return to the healthful labour of an industrious life, I pronounce your pardon; and you are free to go where you please."

Theodore could not speak: he tried; but his voice failed him, and he fainted; while Allen, even though busy in recovering Theodore, could not help exclaiming—

"Sir! sir! Mr. Sedley! sir—you forget—bless me! this is a sort of compounding of felony, sir!—Think again, sir."

But Mr. Sedley was too intent on recovering the poor criminal to attend to what Allen said.

At length he recovered; and seizing Mr. Sedley's hand, which he pressed to his lips, he said: "Generous man! do

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yet more for me! send me not away! let me live with you! let me serve you! let me devote my life to you!"

It so happened that a scheme of this sort had suggested itself to Mr. Sedley: he had considered, that he should but half do his duty, perhaps, if he turned this young man loose on society, to incur the risk of fresh temptations and of fresh crimes; and that it would therefore be better for him to employ him himself, and secure the means of superintending his conduct: and the wish to do this was considerably strengthened, when Theodore, with looks and tones well calculated to inspire confidence, addressed him as above.

After a pause, Mr. Sedley said, "You *shall* live with me:" and Theodore, clasping his hands, raised his eyes to Heaven, tears trickling down his cheeks, as if imploring a blessing on him.

Allen, meanwhile, was convinced that

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his master was mad; and again he expostulated with him; but "Silence!" was his only answer. Still, when he recollected that Theodore was not only pardoned, but was to live in the same house as himself, his pride took the alarm, and in a pert voice he said,—"So, sir, this [illegible] gentleman is to be my fellow-servant, is he?"

"No, sir—he is to have your place," answered Mr. Sedley.

"My—my place, sir? What have I done, sir, that I am to be turned away to make room for a—a——?"

"A what?" cried Theodore involuntarily, and looking defiance at him. "But forgive me," he added, "you and every one ought to revile me."

"No one shall dare to do it before me," said Mr. Sedley. "Mr. Allen, come hither, sir," he continued. "I think you will own, that both you and your family owe me great obligations."

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"Certainly, certainly, sir, and we are always quite ready to acknowledge our sense of them."

"Are you as ready to *prove* it, sir?"

"I hope so, sir."

"Then, you see this Bible—Take it, and repeat after me, not only the common oath, but one that I shall dictate; and swear on the holy word of God never to disclose the transactions of this evening; that is, never by act, word, or deed, to let any one know, or suspect, that Theodore ever was otherwise than the respectable young man which, I trust, his future conduct will prove him to be."—Allen hesitated:—"Remember, sir, you are about to secure my constant friendship, or incur my enmity." Allen took the oath, and Theodore blessed him.

"Now, Allen," said Mr. Sedley, "I mean to take your present place away from you; but it is that I may give you a better. I shall make you one of my

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clerks; but at present I have business for you to do at my country-house. You are a clever, honest young man, and have respectable connections; therefore I shall not hesitate to confide in you."

During part of this speech Allen looked distressed, but his expression was that of gratitude to his master; and when Mr. Sedley desired him, as it was late, to take Theodore with him to prepare a bed for him, Allen obeyed cheerfully; and in a kind voice desired Theodore to follow him. He did so, having first again blessed and thanked Mr. Sedley; who himself retired to bed, but not to rest:—the occurrences of the night, and their consequences, were indeed enough to banish sleep.

He had been in imminent danger of his life; and the man who had assailed it he had promised to take into his house, and employ about his person! And as he reflected on what he had done, he trembled.

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at his own rashness. "True," thought Mr. Sedley, "I have only one child, and that a daughter at school, and I have no near relations, nor any one living with me who can be injured or endangered by an association with this unhappy youth; therefore I am at liberty to please myself, and act up to my own ideas of right in this business. But have I not endangered my own peace? Shall I be able to follow up my indulgence to this man by a liberal though cautious confidence in him? Shall I not at times be tormented with suspicions of him? Shall I not still see him, in fancy, on the point of plunging the murderous weapon in my breast? And, if he should not be as well disposed as I am now willing to think him, shall I not, if he sees my suspicions, be liable to excite his hatred, and be the object of his vengeance? He knows he is in my power; and that, though I bound Allen by an oath not to betray him, I am not bound to secrecy myself.

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If, then, I ever incur his enmity, how can I be sure that he who has once known what it is to seek the life of a fellow-creature, may not, urged by fear and revenge, be easily induced to attempt a similar crime again? However, all these ideas should have occurred to me sooner. I dare not now disappoint the hopes which I have raised; and by endeavouring to give Theodore right motives of action, I will try to prevent all danger of being forced to reprove or distrust him."

Mr. Sedley was right in supposing he should not be able to follow up properly his generous conduct towards Theodore; for he was naturally suspicious, and his understanding was not vigorous enough to enable him to reason down his sensations; and a proof of this he soon exhibited.

Mr. Sedley's study was apart from the house, and a flight of steps led up to it. One night, when Mr. Sedley was writing

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there, by some means or other, he having fallen asleep over his papers, the room took fire, and he was awakened by the noise and warmth of the flames; nor had he time to contrive any means of escaping, before he became insensible, and fell prostrate on the crackling timbers. When he recovered his senses, he found himself in the open air, supported by Theodore; who, happening to be on the spot when the fire broke out, rushed up the stairs at the hazard of his life, and snatched his benefactor from inevitable destruction.—But how could such an accident happen? was the general question.—That, Mr. Sedley could not tell. But he was too unwell that night to go on with any conversation; and after loudly commending Theodore's courage, and declaring that he owed his life to him, he retired to bed.

The next morning Allen repeated his inquiries how the fire could have been occasioned, and Mr. Sedley his answer.

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"Well, it is very strange," observed Allen, "that no one but Theodore should be walking by at the very critical moment! What should he do skulking there at so late an hour, unless he had some particular reason for being there?"

"What reason should he have?" replied Mr. Sedley pettishly, and turned away.

But Allen's observation had awakened a painful suspicion in his mind. Was it impossible that Theodore had set fire to the study on purpose that he might watch his opportunity, and rush in time enough to save Mr. Sedley's life and property, in order to endear himself to him?—or had he robbed him of any bank notes, and hoped to conceal the theft by setting fire to the premises? Then again these suspicions seemed to him both absurd and cruel, and he would entertain them no longer.—Still, in spite of himself, when he saw Theodore, he found that he did

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not receive and thank him with that ardour which he ought to have felt on seeing the preserver of his life.

"We are on equal terms, now," said Mr. Sedley, affecting great ease: "I probably saved your life, and now you have saved mine."

"On equal terms!" exclaimed Theodore: "Do not disparage yourself so far as to imagine such a thing possible! You not only saved my life, but you saved my reputation; and you forgave me, though I had raised my guilty hand against you! What I did, I should have been a reptile had I not done—what you did, exalted you to a level with the highest."

Mr. Sedley observed with pleasure, not unmixed with compunction, the virtuous warmth, and expression of countenance with which he uttered this, and his suspicions vanished; especially when, on Allen's saying to Theodore, "I wonder what could induce you to be

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walking such a cold night, and at so late an hour, near that spot; I should never have thought of such a thing,"—the latter replied, darting an indignant yet manful look at him, "You are too happy to delight in wandering at such hours, and in such a season;—you never raised your hand against the life of a fellow-creature, nor saw yourself on the point of bringing a parent's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. You can *sleep*,—I *would*, but cannot sleep."

"Still it is very strange!"

"What is strange?" replied Theodore, coming up to him with a quivering lip, and an eye full of terrible and revengeful meaning.

"It was strange, and fortunate, that you should be on the spot when the fire took place," said Allen, turning pale.

"It was fortunate—it was a blessed event indeed," replied Theodore, "and I have not lived in vain."

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Mr. Sedley immediately held out his hand to him; and with more heartfelt satisfaction than he had done before he thanked and blessed him: but he could not be easy without examining the closet in which he kept his papers and notes, and which the fire, luckily, had not touched.

It so happened that Mr. Sedley had amused himself by keeping a journal, which was deposited in this closet: some of it he had made into a book; but the journal of the last two months was still in single sheets; and that sheet in which he had noted down his rencontre with Theodore was missing: nor could it any where be found. This circumstance recalled all his suspicions. Theodore, he concluded, had entered his room when he was absent; had looked over his papers; and, seeing his story chronicled, had resolved to destroy the written evidence of his shame; and then, being a desperate

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being, he had, to hide what he had done, endangered the premises and life of his benefactor; but, struck with horror and remorse, had repented, and, rushing in, saved both him and his property.—Yet surely he could not be such a villain!—and Mr. Sedley blushed for his suspicions.

"I will tell him," said he to himself, "of my loss, and watch his looks."

He did so; and Theodore coolly replied,—"Are you sure, sir, that you deposited the sheets which you mention in your closet? If you did, it is strange that they should not be there; for I think I have heard you say that you never leave the closet unlocked: therefore it appears to me more likely that you should have put the MS. in some other place of security, than that any one should have gone to your closet—a closet that is never open—and therefore must have been forcibly entered, if entered at all."

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Mr. Sedley owned that Theodore was likely to be right: but he searched in vain for the MS. and at times his suspicions returned.

But for these suspicions, he would have blessed the day when he took Theodore into his house; for never before had he had such a servant—he tried to anticipate even his very looks—and Mr. Sedley, almost forgot that he had grappled for life in the murderous grasp of his arms.

One evening Mr. Sedley came home from a visit in the neighbourhood on foot, followed by Theodore. Their way lay across the road where Theodore had attacked him; and Mr. Sedley, shuddering as he passed the spot, looked back to see where Theodore was, and what effect it had on him. He was close behind him, and in evident agitation. At this moment, as Mr. Sedley turned his head round again, he received a violent blow, which felled him to the ground. When he

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recovered, he found himself in Theodore's arms, who was busily chafing his temples.

But Mr. Sedley started from him with horror, and exclaiming—"Wretch! who gave me the blow?"—he staggered a few paces, and fell down; while Theodore, with clasped hands, and 'a countenance more in sorrow than in anger,' stood motionless, and too much oppressed to speak.

"Here it was," continued Mr. Sedley, "that we first met: and here I have again received a blow."

Theodore now found his voice, and coldly replied, "A blow indeed, and a severe one too; and though I saw your danger, I could not speak time enough to warn you against it."

"Warn me! what mockery is this?"

"It is not a mockery, sir, but the fact."

"The fact is, that I was knocked down."

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"True;—but the contusion, if you please to put your hand to your head, is, you will find, on your forehead."

Mr. Sedley put his hand to his head—the contusion was on his forehead.

"This is very strange," observed Mr. Sedley.

"Not at all—you struck your head against the arm of this oak which has been felled, and very improperly suffered to lie here and project over the foot-path."

Mr. Sedley, convinced and ashamed, tried to apologize to Theodore for his suspicions.

"Apologize to me for suspecting me! Oh, sir, forbear! I know but too well, that to be liable to suspicion is one of the just punishments of my crime; and punishment enough it is, to be deemed by my preserver and benefactor capable of attempting his life."

As he said this, his tone was so affect-

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ing, and so full of despondence, that Mr. Sedley was agonized with regret for what he had said; and, taking his hand, exclaimed, "You may forgive me, Theodore, but I know not when I shall forgive myself."

When they reached home, they found Allen anxiously expecting them, and wondering they were so late.

"We have come very slowly," said Mr. Sedley, "for I have been knocked down."

"Knocked down!" cried Allen, fixing his eyes suspiciously on Theodore.

Theodore turned pale; but it was with indignation. "Yes," replied Mr. Sedley, "I have had a violent blow indeed."

"But you would go with only ——," returned Allen, "you will be so foolhardy."

"Miscreant!" cried Theodore, clenching his fist in his face, and giving him a look terribly ferocious, "I will make

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you repent of this! Depend on it, I will be revenged!"

So saying, he left the room; and Mr. Sedley explained to Allen how he had received the blow; to which explanation Allen, though Theodore's threat had rather alarmed him, listened with a sort of incredulous air, and provoked Mr. Sedley to declare, that he would take him to the very spot tomorrow to show him the tree, and that then he would make him ask Theodore's pardon.

He did so:- and Allen with a very sullen air was beginning his apology, when Theodore, with dignity, but without any seeming trace of resentment, interrupted him, and desired him to forbear; saying,—"I was wrong to resent so warmly what I have deserved so justly. You and my kind master must continue to suspect me, and I must bear your suspicions, if I can, with patience."

The next day, Theodore asked leave

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to go and see his mother, (for whom he had taken a cottage within three miles of Mr. Sedley's seat,) promising to return the day after: but two, three, four days elapsed, and he did not come; and Allen hoped, and Mr. Sedley feared, that he had absconded. On the evening of the fourth day, however, he returned, and in great agitation entered Mr. Sedley's study, seized his hand, held it to his heart, and faltering out "God for ever bless you!" staggered into a seat, and burst into tears.

"What has happened? what can be the matter?" cried Mr. Sedley.

"My mother is dead! and though I mourn, I rejoice," replied Theodore. "She died blessing me, and calling me the pride and comfort of her life. Oh, sir! but for you I should have had her curses, not her blessings!"

Mr. Sedley could not speak, his heart was too full. He saw the happy parent

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on her death-bed, blessing that son for his virtues, who, but for him, might have expired on a scaffold for his guilt, and have perished, in the prime of youth and activity, for a single crime of which he had bitterly repented: and the cheering glow of conscious benevolence thrilled through his whole frame.

"Now, sir," cried Theodore, rising, "my poor mother's peace is in safety: now, come what may, her heart will never throb with agony for the crimes of her child!"

"But had she lived," said Mr. Sedley kindly, "it might have throbbed with pleasure at the recital of her son's virtues and success in life."

"Never, never!" answered the self-judged Theodore. "What, *I!* a robber, and a murderer in intention, if not in fact! *I* have virtues! *I* have success in life! Impossible! The consciousness that there exist two witnesses of my guilt and shame,

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and that I am daily exposed to be suspected and reproached by them, would palsy all my exertions, and wither all my enjoyments."

"But I will never suspect you again, Theodore; and I never taunted you with your past fault."

"No: *you* never did; but Allen has taunted me with it, and will taunt me again."

"No—I will forbid it:—and do, dear Theodore, try to forget that there are two persons in existence, who know that for a few moments you were not as virtuous as usual. Do forget it, or I shall fancy that you wish me dead."

"Wish *you* dead!" answered Theodore: "No—but——"

"But Allen's death, I suspect, would not grieve you."

"I should endeavour to grieve for it," gravely replied Theodore, and left the room.

When he was gone, Mr. Sedley re-

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volved in his mind all that had passed in this conversation; and he found that the latter part of it left a painful impression. For his *own* safety he could not fear, but he feared for Allen's. A mad passion had once armed Theodore against the life of a fellow creature who had never injured or offended him; and revenge for repeated insults, as he felt them to be,—revenge, a powerful passion also, might urge him to murder Allen; especially as he, himself excepted, was the only evidence of his crime.

But then again, how inconsistent were these fears with the conviction which he was continually expressing of Theodore's talents, and the excellence of his heart! and, angry with himself, he resolved to dismiss his suspicions for ever.

A short time after, he was invited to spend a day or two at the house of a friend in the county, but one who was not able to receive his servant as well as

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himself: he was therefore obliged to leave Theodore behind him; and in spite of his reasons, he felt afraid of leaving him and Allen together. However, he struggled with this foolish fear, as he called it, and set off for his friend's house. But the painful images which he could drive away at home, haunted him continually during his visit. He continually saw in his dreams, Allen struggling with Theodore; and, unable to endure the terrors which poisoned his satisfaction in the society of his friends, he returned home.

The first person whom he met was his housekeeper, with a look of consternation.

"What is the matter? what has happened?" cried Mr. Sedley.

"Allen has disappeared," was her answer; and Mr. Sedley sunk half fainting into his chair.

"Disappeared! When, how, where?" faltered out Mr. Sedley.

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"Two days ago. He had seemed uncomfortable for a day or two before, and he seemed so unwell, that Mr. Theodore insisted on going with him to his room, and sitting with him after he was in bed: and he was the last person who saw him."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Sedley, shuddering.

"Yes—Oh, he was so kind! The next morning, Allen's breakfast being ready, I tapped at his door; but nobody answered, though I knocked again and again. At last I begged Mr. Theodore to go into his room.—He did; but he was gone, and his clothes were gone too. Nor, though Theodore went in search of him immediately, have we heard of him from that time to this."

"Dreadful! horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Sedley, wringing his hands.

"Dear, sir! what, do you think he has made away with himself, that you take on

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thus? If so, he would not have taken his clothes with him."

"Leave me!" cried Mr. Sedley: "where is Theodore?"

"Out, sir."

"When he returns send him to me.

My forebodings were but too just, then!" cried Mr. Sedley, "and he has murdered him! and his blood is on my conscience!" He then paced the room in agony; and while he did so, Theodore entered. Mr. Sedley at sight of him started, shuddered, and hid his face with his hands.

Theodore but too well understood what this action meant—the reception was just what he expected; and with folded arms, and pale as death, he stood silent before Mr. Sedley. But he vainly expected Mr. Sedley to speak; he knew not how to word the terrible accusation which he wished to utter; and there was a dignity of manner, and a certain expression in

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Theodore's countenance, which gave a direct denial to the charge. While he continued to pause, Theodore said, in the tone of resigned despair,

"You have not kept your word with me, sir—you promised never to suspect me again; and at this moment I see that you look on me as poor Allen's murderer."

"I do:—and after what has passed, after the last conversation which we had together, who would not suspect you?"

"I may be wrong, but I think no one *ought* to suspect me; for the very circumstances which you mention are strong arguments in my favour. Had I wished to destroy the poor man in question, should I have ventured to do it, knowing, as I must do, that your suspicions would naturally at first light upon me? The moment I found Allen was gone, I knew my fate."

"Your fate!" replied Mr. Sedley:

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"what do you mean by that? I will do nothing rashly; I will advertise this unhappy young man, I will make strict search for him: and not till all search and inquiry are vain, will I——"

"What?"

"Consider how I am to act. In the mean while, let me hear your story."

"*My story* is soon told," answered Theodore with a sarcastic smile. "Soon after your departure, I observed a change in Allen's appearance: he became pale and low-spirited, and it was evident that something weighed heavily on his mind. This excited my compassion: I knew but too well what it was to have a load on the spirits, and I felt for him. Still, for some time, I did not obtrude my suspicions of his uneasiness upon Allen himself. At length, however, I could not help taking notice of his visible anxiety; but, rather rudely, he repulsed the expressions of my sympathy, and the offer of my services. But, the evening preceding his disappearance,

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he seemed so wretched, and so agitated, that I insisted on accompanying him to his room, and on remaining with him during part of the night. I did so: but in vain did I endeavour to obtain his confidence; and his behaviour to me was an odd alternation of insult, and gratitude for my attention. At three in the morning I left him, and apparently more composed, and disposed for sleep.—At eight in the morning he was gone."

This story certainly bore evident marks of truth; and had the relater of it been any other than Theodore, Mr. Sedley would not have doubted its correctness. But suspicion does not reason, it only feels; and Mr. Sedley had for some time past expected that Theodore would revenge himself on Allen, for his continual allusions to his crime, and also for being an evidence of that crime.

"Well, all this may be very true," said Mr. Sedley, after a pause.

"May be very true!" cried Theodore,

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trembling with agitation; "by the great God who created me, I swear that I have uttered the truth, and nothing but the truth!"

"Leave me," replied Mr. Sedley; "I want to be alone."

Theodore obeyed; but, as he left the room, he turned his eyes on Mr. Sedley with a look of such humble reproach, and such deep woe, that he wished from the bottom of his soul that he could assure him he no longer suspected him.

In a short time Mr. Sedley had laid his plan of action: an advertisement was put in all the papers, and active search begun in the neighbourhood; nay, the ponds in the garden were dragged: but all these methods proved fruitless; weeks elapsed, and no Allen was seen or heard of.

During all this time, Theodore never left the house, though Mr. Sedley was in hopes that he would make his escape. But so far from seeming to wish to effect it, he

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appeared resolved to be forthcoming whenever he should be called for; and he was continually hinting to Mr. Sedley, that, if he had it in contemplation to take him up on suspicion, he should make it a point of conscience to be in readiness.

But the idea of proceeding thus agonized every feeling of Mr. Sedley; still, he feared it was his duty to do so. To others, indeed, Allen's disappearance seemed nothing unusual; and the idea of his being murdered did not enter the imagination of any one but himself: but it was natural enough that *he* should imagine it. Yet, notwithstanding the suggestions of his conscience, when Theodore, on all inquiry for Allen having proved fruitless, demanded to know his fate from Mr. Sedley, the latter declared, that it might perhaps be his duty to take him into custody on suspicion, but that his feelings would not let him do it; he must there-

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fore leave him, if he was guilty, to the vengeance of heaven and the stings of his own upbraiding conscience.

Theodore made no reply to this speech, he only grasped Mr. Sedley's hand with a sort of convulsive pressure; then, faintly articulating, "God bless you!" he rushed out of the room.

The next morning he was not to be found, but the following letter was lying on his table:

"You believe me, I know you do, to be the murderer of Allen; and though my whole soul recoils at the cruel suspicion, from you, such a suspicion is retributive justice. I know that I have deserved it; but I cannot bear to exist under the consciousness of such an imputation. Therefore, I am going in search of Allen; nor, unless I find him, shall you ever, with my consent, hear of me, or behold me more.

"Farewell! and be assured that with my last breath I shall bless and pray for you. "THEODORE."

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A thousand mixed emotions agitated Mr. Sedley's heart on reading this letter. At one moment he loathed his suspicions, at another he felt them confirmed; then the next instant, his hopes of Theodore's innocence amounted almost to certainty. When it was known in the family that Theodore was gone in search of Allen, the lamentations which the loss of him occasioned, and the expressions of admiration of his generosity, and exclamations of, "But it is so like him, for he never seemed to think of himself, or his own inconvenience," which burst from every member of it, awakened an interest so deep for that unhappy young man in Mr. Sedley's breast, that he wished to recall him, and endeavour once more to reconcile him to himself.

In a few months, Mr. Sedley, being continually haunted by the idea of Theodore and Allen, and his mind in consequence dwelling perpetually on one subject, his appetite failed him; he slept little;

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ate less, and was so altered a man, that his friends insisted on his calling in medical advice. He did so; and his physician seeing very evidently that something pressed heavily on his mind, recommended him to change the scene, and mix in the gay society of a watering-place.

With this advice he reluctantly complied; but at length he found the benefit of it. In spite of himself he was amused; and at last he was interested in the company with whom he associated. Nor was it long before he became so captivated with the charms of a young lady whom he frequently met in public and in private companies, that he made her an offer of his hand, and was accepted.

Nor, during the time of his courtship, or while he continued absent from his own home, did the images of Theodore and Allen recur in their usual gloomy manner, to oppress and agitate his mind. But as soon as he returned to his home,

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his old associations reassumed their influence; and Mrs. Sedley beheld, with painful astonishment, her cheerful, entertaining husband changed into a nervous and silent hypochondriac.

Mrs. Sedley was not a woman to endure what she did not like, in silent acquiescence. She reproached, she rallied, she expostulated; and having a high idea of her own eloquence, Mr. Sedley had to listen to a long and daily oration on the folly of low spirits: till at length, being aware that the cause of his depression was more *real* than she imagined, and piqued at having his lowness attributed to unfounded folly, he resolved to unburthen his mind to his wife, and lessen the weight, which, for want of due participation, had long worn down his mind, and preyed upon his frame. And in a few moments the long-treasured secret was a secret no longer; for Mrs. Sedley told it to all her acquaintance; and Mr.

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Sedley, shocked at his wife's indiscretion, and ashamed of his own folly in confiding to her a secret that endangered the life of a young man whom he had pretended to befriend and protect, felt more miserable after he had unburthened his mind than he had before.

And his misery was soon increased by the torrent of reproaches which overwhelmed him on all sides, for not having given Theodore up to justice for his first offence. He was told, that he had let loose a monster upon society, and that he would be responsible for all the robberies and murders which Theodore would in future commit.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Sedley's brother and some of her cousins were in the law, and he was tried and convicted of folly and criminality, by legal, and consequently unanswerable authority. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Mr. Sedley,

a man whose heart was kinder than his understanding was strong, should be told that he had acted weakly and wickedly, till he thought so himself; especially when, on examining a well near his garden in order to ascertain the possibility of widening it, a body was discovered in it bearing evident marks of violence.

But near two years elapsed, and no Theodore was again heard of; and most devoutly did the wife-led Mr. Sedley pray that he never might be seen or heard of more; when a groom, who lived with Mr. Sedley after Allen's departure, and before Theodore went away, wrote word from London, that he had seen Theodore alight from the Portsmouth coach.

"I am sorry for it," cried Mr. Sedley, turning pale as he read the letter. But his more manly wife laughed at his pusillanimity, and did not leave him till she had prevailed on him to go and make his

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deposition before a magistrate, in order for the apprehension of Theodore.

To be brief—the deposition was made, and the warrant granted; and it was served on Theodore just as he was coming out of a mail-office yard.

Theodore started, but smiled indignantly when the warrant was served on him, and when he found that he was taken up on suspicion of having murdered Allen. But he sighed, and sighed deeply, when he saw that Mr. Sedley was his accuser, and reflected on the nature of the grounds on which his suspicions were founded. He assured the officers he had no means of escape, nor intention of escaping; all he begged was, to be allowed to write a letter to a friend, who would, he expected, call for him at the office in an hour or two: and they allowed him to write, while they stood at the door. Then Theodore having asked how long it would be before his trial came on, and finding the assizes

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were approaching, set off with his jailors for the prison in the county where the crime was said to have been committed.

As soon as Mr. Sedley heard that Theodore was actually in prison, his agonies of mind were unspeakable, and he bewailed the day when he first confided his cares to his wife; or, indeed, he regretted the moment when he was rash enough to marry; for Mrs. Sedley was completely a domestic tyrant: she was one of those notable, busy, dogmatical, and shrewish women, (and there are such,) who pique themselves on carrying every point that they have once declared they will carry; one of those sweet-tempered beings, who, after they have been reasoned with for hours on the impropriety, or folly, of an action which they are going to commit, coolly answer, "No matter, I will have my own way, and there's an end of it."

And even such a woman was Mrs. Sedley.

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But Mr. Sedley, whether out of pique to his wife, or from remorse of heart, was never so convinced of Theodore's innocence, as now that he was going to prosecute him for a supposed murder; nor could he be easy without sending to Theodore in prison, to know if there were any conveniencies or indulgencies that money could procure, which he wished to have; because, if there were, his purse was at his service: and he assured him most earnestly, that he had been compelled to take the steps which he had taken against him, and that he repented of what he had done, from the very bottom of his soul.

Theodore replied, that he wanted nothing in prison but what he was rich enough to procure; and that he knew very well how reluctant Mr. Sedley had been to prosecute him. He added, that he should always remember that Mr. Sedley's present severity to him was

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against his inclination, but that his past kindness was the unforced offering of his own generous heart.

Mr. Sedley read this letter, and was more miserable than he was before: nor could he help loudly protesting that the idea of being forced to appear against Theodore, occasioned him insupportable anguish; though he knew that he was only going to perform a duty incumbent on him, as the body found in the well, in size and shape exactly resembled Allen; as the clothes on it were such as he wore when he disappeared; as the linen of the murdered man was marked W. A.; and as such parts of the features as were not disfigured by violence bore a strong likeness to the features of Allen.

Theodore, meanwhile, on being asked when he meant to consult with his counsel, declared that he did not mean to employ any, but should plead his own cause: and except one friend, who visited him

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in prison, he saw no one, but busied himself in drawing up his defence.

Indeed Theodore rejoiced in the opportunity of defending himself publicly, and telling his own story: nor would he, if he could, have avoided his trial, because he found that his character had been most cruelly injured, or rather utterly talked away, by Mrs. Sedley, and the real facts so distorted by misrepresentation, that in a court of justice only could he hope to clear himself—and to that he confidently appealed.

The day appointed for the trial at length arrived, and the court was crowded at an early hour. When Theodore appeared, every eye was turned upon him with eager curiosity, and Mr. Sedley could with difficulty be kept from fainting; while even Mrs. Sedley herself felt her animosity against her husband's former *protégé* considerably softened, when she saw in the imagined culprit, a hand-

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some, tall, graceful youth, whose deportment was calculated to excite respect, whose countenance invited confidence, and whose large dark eyes sparkled with intelligence. "I hope he will be acquitted," was the general whisper throughout the court; and Mr. Sedley, overhearing it, devoutly cried "Amen."

This was an act of rebellion against his commander in chief: it consequently restored her to all her implacability; and she trembled with impatience till the counsel for the crown opened the prosecution.

He began by an eulogium on the great and well-known humanity of Mr. Sedley, and drew from it an argument to prove the very bad opinion which Mr. Sedley must have formed of the prisoner's wickedness, founded on the most irrefragable evidence; when he, even *he*, this man made up of the milk of human kindness, was induced to withdraw the protection which he had formerly shown him, and

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take him up on a charge of murder. Having then called witnesses to prove the discovery of the body, and to prove also that it was the person of a murdered man, and the probability of its being the body of Allen, he proceeded to bring evidence to prove that Theodore was the person who murdered Allen; but before he did this, he lamented that he was forbidden, by the mercy and forbearance of the laws of this country, to relate some previous occurrences in the prisoner's life which had a strong tendency to establish the likelihood of his guilt in the present instance. (During this part of his speech, Theodore was violently agitated, and so was Mr. Sedley.)

The principal and strongest evidence against the prisoner was, it may be supposed, Mr. Sedley himself. He arose, pale, and trembling, almost unable to speak, and declared on oath, that Theodore had in his presence protested that he would be revenged on Allen, in conse-

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quence of the daily taunts with which Allen insulted him. After his examination, a long and various one, was at an end, Mrs. Morris, Mr. Sedley's housekeeper, was called to prove the circumstance of Theodore's having insisted on accompanying Allen to his room, and of his having been the last person who saw him; and she gave her evidence with so many tears, intermixed with such heartfelt praises of the prisoner, and prayers for his deliverance, (while the court vainly tried to stop her affectionate effusions,) that her emotion became contagious, and Theodore himself was visibly affected.

Here ended the evidence for the crown; and the prisoner was told that he would now be heard in his defence. Theodore then, after a few moments of evident emotion and embarrassment, began as follows:—

"Gentlemen of the jury,

"You have just heard a very animated

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speech delivered with every grace of gesture and manner, and I know that I shall appear to every possible disadvantage after what has just been heard, especially as I rise to disclose to you in all its enormity, that guilt to which the learned gentleman who has just sat down only remotely alluded, for I am resolved that all shall now be known of me that can be known ; I am resolved that the only crime which I ever committed shall be publicly acknowledged by me ; and I rejoice that I am thus arraigned at a public tribunal, because it enables me to lay aside all concealment, and prevents me from ever trembling again in the presence of any one from the fear of detection.

" Mr. Sedley, Gentlemen of the jury, could have informed you, had the law allowed him, that, hurried away by a mad and fatal passion for a worthless but fascinating woman, and agonized by the fear

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of losing her, I consented, in a moment of desperation, to lie in wait for him on the highway, and plunder him of his property:—but he could not have told you, nor can I myself give you the faintest idea of the horror and remorse which seized me when I had committed the action; when I saw myself obliged, in self-defence, to plunge still deeper in crime, and endeavour to take the life of Mr. Sedley then, in order to prevent him from taking mine by means of the law at a future season. Oh! if I live a century, the agony of that moment will never be effaced from my recollection! But, thank God! my murderous efforts were frustrated; Mr. Sedley was rescued, and I made a prisoner.

"Oh, hour of wretchedness! As I walked with him to his house I saw nothing but my poor mother's frantic agonies when she heard of my guilt; I heard nothing but her agonizing shrieks, her

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dying groans: and methought that with her last breath she cursed me, and called me parricide!

"Ye who have affectionate parents, and who feel as children should feel, imagine, if you can endure to do it, my tortures that moment. Mr. Sedley, (and may every blessing here and hereafter be his!) Mr. Sedley saw and pitied my distress—he pitied my poor mother—he pitied me: he thought that I was a true penitent; and he nobly and piously thought that he should do an action more acceptable in the eyes of the Supreme Being, by allowing me to live for repentance and amendment, than if, by delivering me up to justice, he cut me off in the prime of youth and expectation, and at the same time ran the risk of *destroying* my poor mother by sorrow and disgrace.

"He forgave me:—he did yet more—he trusted me; he allowed me to devote my life to him; and he promised, if on

trial he was contented with me, to bestow yet further favours on me, and give me the means of being useful to him and to my fellow-creatures.

"I fell at his feet, fainting from excess of gratitude and joy: I recovered; and my heart took a voluntary vow, That from that day forward he should never have to blush for the being whom he had preserved; but, on the contrary, that my conduct should be such as to defy the severest inspector to fix on it, with *justice*, the slightest imputation of guilt. I vowed; and I have kept my vow:—yes, I have kept it faithfully, although you see me here arraigned before you as a revengeful, hateful murderer.

"But I bless God that I have been so arraigned; as I know that I can prove my innocence of that crime, and of every other, except the intended robbery.

"Besides, the false and injurious reports which have so industriously been spread

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against me in this country, I have now an opportunity of reducing publicly to a mere relation of matters of fact; and I shall have to answer for no crime but that which I in reality committed: and therefore have I suffered myself to be confined in a dismal dungeon—therefore have I consented to appear thus as a criminal at the bar.

"But I shall obtrude no longer on the patience of the court, than by a few short observations. I would hold myself up as a dread example to the young of the danger of illicit connections, and of the fatal influence of a first crime on the whole of our future life. I know by that action, committed at the instigation of illicit passion, I have for ever blasted my prospects in life, and condemned myself to lead a joyless existence as an insulated, unattached, and solitary being;—for never shall a wife of mine be reproached with my disgrace; never shall a child

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of mine be taught to blush at calling me father :—No—all my future life must be spent in constant endeavours to expiate, by a series of active duties, the one disgraceful action which I committed against the interests of society and myself. By the death of a distant relation I am become rich ; and I look forward with the cheering hope, that those who this day have seen me tried as a murderer, and heard me own myself a robber, in intention at least, shall one day hear of me as a being who, dead to every personal gratification, endeavours to find happiness in administering to that of others ; and, above all, who desires to make his peace with God and man, by atoning for one deeply repented crime by successive acts of utility and virtue. Now nothing remains for me to do but to ask a few questions of Mr. Sedley, and then call one witness."

Here he ceased :—and as soon as the

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strong effect and emotion produced by his speech had subsided, he put the following questions to Mr. Sedley :—

"It has been industriously propagated, sir, that I purposely set fire to your study, and for two reasons :—First, because I knew that my life was in your power, and consequently wished to lay you under an obligation to me of a nature so sacred as to make it impossible for you ever to deliver me up to justice, I therefore set fire to your study that I might rush in and save you from the flames at the apparent risk of my life.

"Secondly, sir, I set fire to your study, it has been said, in order to burn some pages of a journal written by you, in which my crime was noted down. I now therefore call on you to declare upon oath, how far such reports have been authorised by you."

"They have not been authorised by me," replied Mr. Sedley eagerly. "I

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confess that at first I did suspect that the fire was not accidental; but I soon learnt to blush for my suspicions, especially when, on Allen's expressing his wonder that you should be so opportunely on the spot when the fire broke out, you answered, that not being able to sleep much, from remorse and uneasiness of mind, you were in the constant habit of taking a solitary and midnight walk, and that you commonly walked past my study; and I here publicly and solemnly declare, that you, at the risk of your own life, rushed through the flames in order to preserve mine."

"Now then, sir, to the second report," said Theodore,—"Did you ever find the papers which you missed after the night of the fire, and which led you, I am told, to suspect the fire not to be accidental?"

"I did—I found them locked up in a closet in my own lodging-room."

"There is yet another charge against

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me which has been circulated in conversation, namely, That I one evening, as I was following you home, gave you, with a murderous intent, a blow on the forehead which felled you to the ground."

"A most false and calumnious charge indeed," indignantly exclaimed Mr. Sedley: "the blow was proved, even to the satisfaction of Allen himself, to have been given me by the arm of a tree which projected over the path; for the blow was on my forehead, whereas had it been given me by you it must have been on the back of my head. In short," added Mr. Sedley, "I know of no actual guilt which can with justice be imputed to you, except that of the intended robbery; and God grant that you may prove yourself as free from the guilt of murder as I believe you to be of all the charges which you have now mentioned!"

"I thank you from the bottom of my soul, sir, for this open and public

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justification," cried Theodore: "now the expectations which led me to submit to the disgrace and anxiety of a public trial are fully answered, and I have nothing more to do but to free myself from the charge of murder; to do this I shall only call one witness.

As he said this his voice faltered, and the heart of every one throbbed with anxious expectation.

"Call one William Allen," cried Theodore.

He was called.

"Here!" answered the man, bustling through the crowd up to the witness bar, as if eager to show himself; while Mr. Sedley joyfully exclaimed, "Oh! God! it is he! it is Allen!" and Mrs. Morris, in her joy, threw her arms round Allen's neck, and was carried in a violent hysteric out of court.

"What is all this?" cried the judge; "Who is this man?—Who is Allen?"

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"My lord," replied Theodore, bowing, "this is William Allen, the man for whose murder I stand arraigned."

A shout, an universal shout, was heard till the judge commanded silence.

"And why was not he produced before?—Why did you not come forward, sir, before?" said the judge, addressing Allen.

"Because Mr. Theodore would not let me, my lord; and I am bound to oblige him, whatever he asks. But if it be not informal, I should wish to be allowed to tell my story."

"No—no," replied the judge, "this is a strange business, and I have had enough of it. Let the prisoner be discharged; and I shall adjourn the court till after dinner." Theodore was accordingly discharged, and the court adjourned. But though the judge was unwilling to listen to Allen's relation, every other person in court was eager to hear it; and Allen,

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while standing at the witness bar, with great satisfaction told the following story to the attentive and crowded audience around him:—

"I must own I behaved very wrongly in taunting Mr. Theodore for the crime of the intended robbery to which I was privy; and I took an ungenerous advantage, as he was in my power, to let him know I suspected him of being capable of committing other crimes, as he had committed one. And one day I did provoke him so much, that, in Mr. Sedley's hearing, he vowed he would have his revenge of me: and sure enough he has had it; for I shall never forgive myself, though he has forgiven me, for my ill conduct to him."

"Go on," cried Theodore gently.

"Well," continued Allen, "I received some news which afflicted me greatly, and made it necessary for me to quit my master, and take French leave

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of every one. But in the interim I was so wretched, that Mr. Theodore saw my uneasiness; and though I had always behaved so like a dog to him, he spoke to me in the kindest manner, lamented my evident distress, and earnestly begged to know whether it was in his power to alleviate it. I rudely repulsed him, and refused any assistance from him. Indeed, neither he nor any one could assist me. However, on the night of my disappearance, Mr. Theodore insisted on accompanying me to my room, for he thought I was likely to make away with myself; till at last, though I was too proud to confide the cause of my distress to him, I was so overcome by his kindness, that I cried like a child, and thought how little I had deserved it. He left me at three; and in an hour after, I had packed up my things and was off."

Here he paused.

"Well, sir;—go on," cried one of

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the counsel who remained to hear Allen's story, "and pray tell us whither you went. This has a very suspicious appearance, to go off without assigning any reason to any one, and suffer yourself to be supposed dead!"

"I had my reasons, sir."

"Name them."

"The truth was: A dear friend, a very dear friend of mine, was to be transported for a felony; and being afraid he should die on the passage, as he was in bad health, he wished me to get leave to go with him: indeed it was my duty to go; for, to speak the truth, this friend of mine was my own father. He is dead and gone now, poor soul! and from the bottom of my heart I believe he was entirely innocent of the charge for which he suffered, though the circumstantial evidence was strong against him. Well, I obtained leave, as the kind-hearted gentle-

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men in office approved my motives for asking it. Besides, my father was innocent, I am sure he was." Here he stopped, and wept bitterly, while his audience sympathized in the feelings of an affectionate child.

Allen soon recovered himself, and went on :—

"While we were stopping to take in water on the voyage, a swift-sailing vessel from England overtook us, and who should I see coming alongside of us in the boat but Mr. Theodore! Oh! how shocked and surprised was I to hear that Mr. Sedley suspected him of having murdered me, and that he was sure nothing but my actual appearance could clear his character! But that, for the present at least, was impossible. He then proceeded to tell me how, by the most indefatigable inquiries, he had traced me to Newgate, and even to on board ship, though I had changed my name to that assumed by my

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father on his trial.—That finding it impossible for him to carry me back with him to Mr. Sedlley's, as I could not and ought not to leave my father, he had hurried back to London, and requested an audience of the great man who had been so kind to me; and having told his lordship how necessary to his peace and welfare it was, that he should be on the spot, in case of my father's death, in order to bring me back to England as soon as possible, he also obtained leave to go to Botany-Bay, and he carried with him a letter of recommendation to the governor—so greatly, I fancy, had his way of talking, and his appearance, prejudiced his lordship in his favour.

"When we landed in New Holland, Mr. Theodore was soon usefully employed: for my part, I had enough to do to attend on my poor sick father, and many is the time that Mr. Theodore has come to assist me in my mournful task."

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Here his voice faltered again, but he went on :—

" At length my poor father died ; and, dear ! how kindly did Mr. Theodore try to console me ! Indeed he was so kind, that I was even more impatient than himself to return to England ; and we anxiously waited for a vessel to carry us back, and enable me to clear up his character to Mr. Sedley ; when one day as we were walking with some of the criminals, who were showing the governor's secretary grounds which they had been clearing, one of them, who was transported for a highway robbery, but who was also a very dexterous pickpocket, picked the secretary's pocket of his purse; but the gentleman having felt the hand in his fob immediately gave the alarm, and the skilful villain conveyed the purse into my pocket. The secretary, an angry man, insisted that we should all be searched, and the purse was found on *me !*

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On which, while I was nearly dead with agony and shame, he ordered me into custody. But Mr. Theodore interfered; and assuring him that he knew me well, and that he was convinced I was incapable of the crime imputed to me, and came to Botany Bay in consequence of my virtue, as he was pleased to say, and not my vices, he more than half convinced him that the guilt was in reality that of some great proficient in the art of pocket-picking, who had dexterously transferred the appearance of criminality to me; and at his earnest entreaties I was immediately liberated.

"But in the mean while Mr. Theodore's quick eye discovered in the real culprit great signs of guilt; and in the fellow's hearing he bade the secretary take care that a strict watch was kept over that man, pointing to him.

"Still I was regarded with suspicion by the secretary and others, and Mr.

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Theodore was told he had better not be so much with me, as it injured him in the estimation of his employer. But he replied that he knew I was an injured man; and that if no one else countenanced me he would, whatever might be the consequences to himself. But the real criminal never forgave either him or me from that moment; and meeting me one day alone, the thirst of revenge got the better of all other considerations—he fell upon me with a design, no doubt, to take my life; but just as I was quite faint with struggling, and gave myself over for lost, Mr. Theodore came in sight, and I am proud to say that I owe my life to him and his generous exertions.

"As I sobbed out my thanks to him—I never, never shall I forget the agony with which he wrung his hands, and said, 'Yes, Allen—I have now saved two lives; but still I feel that the satisfaction

which this reflection imparts to me cannot counterbalance the misery of knowing that I once was on the point of taking away the life of one fellow-creature. Oh! Allen,' added he, 'reflect on my sad fate, and think of its retributive justice. Behold me self-condemned, with my prospects blasted in the prime of youth, only because I was guilty of crimes in intention; and I, who was merely tempted to endeavour the crime of murder in *self-defence*, was exposed by that one uncommitted fault to be suspected of the dreadful wickedness of murder in cold-blood, and from the suggestions of malice and revenge.'

"At length, the villain who had injured my reputation and assailed my life was sentenced to die for a felony which he had committed; and at the gallows he completely cleared me from the guilt which he had caused to be imputed to me. The next week a vessel was about to sail for England, and Mr. Theodore ob-

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tained leave for us to take our passage in it. We did so, and were landed safe at Portsmouth; whence we came to London by the coach.

"During the journey, to our great surprise and consternation, we heard from a native of this town, whom we took up on the road, the whole story of my disappearance, and of Mr. Sedley's suspicions in consequence of it. In short, we heard amply detailed every circumstance relative to this unhappy business. I was so exasperated that I was about to discover myself; but Mr. Theodore in a whisper conjured me to be silent; and as I said before, I could refuse him nothing: then, in answer to some inquiries of his, we learnt that Mr. Sedley, a good-natured, kind-hearted man, as they called him, but not over wise, had been made a fool and dupe of by Mr. Theodore; but that, on his marriage with Mrs. Sedley, a sharp, clever, managing woman, with all her wits

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about her, and one who would have her own way, she had got from him the whole secret concerning Mr. Theodore and me, which weighed on his mind and ruined his health; and on the discovery of the body of a murdered person in the well, she had insisted that he should cause Mr. Theodore to be taken up, if ever he was seen in England again.

"And sure enough he was known, and taken up soon after in London, while expecting me at an inn in Holborn. Instead of him, I found a letter from him informing me of what had passed; and the misery and indignation I felt were so great, that they completely made me insensible of the pleasure I should otherwise have experienced, at finding by the same letter, that he was, by the death of a relation, become possessed of a considerable fortune. But I should have set off directly for Mr. Sedley's house, had not Mr. Theodore positively forbidden my visits

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to him in prison, unless I would come so disguised that no one could know me."

"But suppose, sir," said the same gentleman who had spoken before, "you had died before Mr. Theodore's trial came on! I think your friend incurred a very foolish risk by his fine scheme of standing a trial to clear his reputation publicly, for he might have been hanged notwithstanding his innocence."

"No, sir," replied Allen, "not so—real gratitude does not do its work by halves; I took the precaution, knowing a little of the law, to go and discover myself to my sister and her son; and I put it in their power to prove beyond the possibility of doubt, on the day of trial, should any accident happen to me, that I was alive and well after Mr. Theodore was taken up for having murdered me.

"To conclude: I concealed myself, as Mr. Theodore desired, till to-day; and here I am, to prove Mr. Theodore's

innocence of the crime of murder, and do justice to his many virtues."

This story impressed every auditor with the strongest feelings of pity and admiration for Theodore, while it also raised the relater in every one's esteem, and the late criminal at the bar was congratulated and complimented by some of the first characters in the county. Mrs. Sedley, meanwhile, had stolen unobserved out of court. She had prided herself on making her husband accuse Theodore, in order that she might prove her power over him; and believing implicitly in her own sagacity, she had persuaded herself that he was guilty, and that his conviction would tend to confirm more than ever the general opinion of her superior intelligence. Nor, to do her justice, was it possible for any one not to own, that after the discovery of the body, which so many circumstances seemed to prove to be the body of Allen, though it afterwards turned out

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to be that of one William Althorpe, it was an act of necessary justice in Mr. Sedley to take up Theodore on suspicion of having murdered him, and so far she was perfectly right in instigating her husband to take the steps which he did. But she was not right in detailing every where, with eager and indefatigable minuteness, all the circumstances which had attended Mr. Sedley's acquaintance with Theodore. She was not right in endeavouring to prejudice the minds even of his jurymen against the unhappy youth, and in causing paragraphs relating to the whole business to appear in the provincial and other papers; and her conscience now whispered her that she had done this, and in so doing had acted the part of a malignant persecutor. And wherefore had she done it? Merely out of opposition to her husband, and because he persisted in believing that he had acted right in not giving up the youthful criminal to justice.

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Therefore, whenever she told the story, it had been interlarded with "but had Mr. Sedley been so fortunate as to know *me* then, had he consulted *me*, and taken *my* advice, this childish wicked action of his, which he calls *generous*, would not have been performed, and then the poor unfortunate, good, honest creature Allen would have been alive to this time! for this wretch Theodore would have paid the forfeit of his crime on the gallows." It is to be supposed that Mrs. Sedley's auditors agreed with her implicitly in opinion, and complimented her on her sagacity: consequently Mrs. Sedley looked forward to the hour of Theodore's condemnation as a season of triumph for her. But Theodore was acquitted, and what she had expected would be his disgrace turned out his glory; and Mrs. Sedley's shame and confusion were in proportion to what her hopes of exultation had been. Besides, what a triumph it was for Mr. Sedley!

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and how should she ever be able to rule him again!

These thoughts, and the violence of a temper unused to contradiction, operated so forcibly on a very delicate and consumptive frame, that when she got home she found herself seriously ill; and though Theodore had certainly not taken the life of Allen, it was by no means so certain that he had not contributed to endanger the life of Mrs. Sedley.

But while Mrs. Sedley hastened out of court to hide her feelings from every one, Mr. Sedley could not bear to go without having some conversation with Theodore. Yet, how could he venture to approach him?

But Theodore spared him the effort; he accosted him, he seized his hand, he thanked him again and again for his past kindness, and that mercy which had saved him for atonement and amendment; and declared to him, that he could easily excuse and pardon his enforced act of

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hostility against him; nay more, that he applauded it as an act of rigid duty.

"Oh, Theodore! I would, but dare not ask you home with me," cried Mr. Sedley:—and Theodore understood him.

But many gentlemen, and ladies too, in court, had been so prejudiced in his favour by what had passed, that invitations flowed in on him on all sides; and the self-condemned, the contrite Theodore saw himself the object of interest and respect.

To conclude my story:—Mrs. Sedley, the victim of her own bad temper, did not long survive Theodore's acquittal, and her husband felt relieved by her death. True, she had beauty; true, she had talents; but her temper enveloped them in a baleful mist, and made their attractions ineffectual, as a rose growing by chance in the midst of the holly bush, and its formidable thorns would vainly tempt the hand of the passenger to cull its fragrant beauties.

On her death, Mr. Sedley invited

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Theodore to live with him as his friend and companion, and to assist him (which he was very capable of doing) in the education of his only daughter, who was at school when Theodore first entered his family; while Allen, who had resolved never to leave Theodore, was made principal clerk to Mr. Sedley.

But Theodore, faithful to his resolution, was not contented with saving Mr. Sedley the fatigue of attending to business, and assisting him to form the mind of his child; he devoted his fortune entirely to the purposes of charity, and his leisure hours to endeavour to comfort those who mourned from misfortune, or from the consciousness of guilt. But his most favourite mode of relieving distress was that of lending sums opportunely to tradesmen on the brink of bankruptcy, and by that means preserving them often from ruin; for he knew that, had his father been so assisted, he and his mother should not have been reduced to absolute beggary,

nor he have been obliged to leave college when about to distinguish himself there.

In the mean while, Mary Anne Sedley grew in beauty and in virtue; and Theodore was as fond of her as even her father was:—but, alas! he found at length, that though their affection was the same in degree, it was not the same in nature; and Theodore looking upon himself as incapacitated, by the crime of his early youth, to become the husband of miss Sedley, or of any woman, resolved to undertake a long journey, and not return till Mary Anne was married.

He at length summoned up resolution to communicate his intentions to Mr. Sedley, and he did so in the presence of his daughter; who started, and immediately left the room in tears.

"You see, Theodore, how the idea of losing you hurts that poor girl," cried Mr. Sedley; "have pity on her, if you have none on me."

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"Oh, sir," replied Theodore, "allow me to have pity on myself."

He then laid open to Mr. Sedley the state of his heart, and had the satisfaction of finding that Mr. Sedley, despising the objections which might be urged by the world against his giving his daughter to a man disgraced as Theodore had beeen, would rejoice to bestow her on this well-tried pupil of sorrow, this repentant child of error. Besides, he was convinced that his daughter loved him; and in answer to Theodore's reasons for not marrying, which were such as he had urged on his trial, Mr. Sedley answered, "Well, I shall say no more; but Mary Anne shall decide."

He then went in pursuit of her; and having made known to her Theodore's love, he led the blushing but happy girl back into the room where he had left him, and Mary Anne heard from himself a disclosure of his passion, and the reason why he could not think of endeavouring to gain her affections.

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"You need not take that trouble," replied Mary Anne; "for my father emboldens me to tell you, that my affections are yours already."

Away, for the moment at least, fled Theodore's disinterested resolutions and sage principles of action. He was beloved, and he was happy!—But his fears returned; and relinquishing again the hand which he had so fondly held, he exclaimed, "No:—it cannot, must not be—and I am doomed to be miserable."

"Mr. Mortimer," cried miss Sedley, (for Theodore had re-assumed his own name,) "you certainly have a right to be as miserable as you please, but not to make me miserable also, and I own that my happiness depends on you. And how weak are your arguments against becoming a husband! Is it not said, that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance? And why should we suppose that mortals

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should dare to treat with contumely those whom the Deity regards with looks of complacency? Besides, suppose that any one were to reproach me, as you choose to imagine such a thing possible, with your juvenile error, should I not feel myself and you above the reach of the petty malice? while I answered, 'He makes me the happiest of women.'"

"But could you be happy, while conscious that I was to some people an object of scorn and aversion?"

"Why not? Those people ought to be, and must be, objects of scorn and aversion to me; and could my happiness be influenced by the opinion of the weak and the narrow-minded? Your crime was real and great, but so have been your virtues; and why should one crime be deemed heavy enough to outweigh many good actions?"

"But to have my children reproached with their father's crime!"

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"Let them hear of it first from you—let them see how one fault can embitter a man's whole life, and they will tremble how they err themselves. Nor is it possible for children to be taught by any one to regard that parent with contempt, whose active virtues they are in the daily habit of witnessing. Once for all, remember that these fears are *only* fears, and may never be realised; whereas our mutual love is *reality*: and if fear is to be conqueror in this business, I shall be the sacrifice to what you imagine is virtue, but what I consider as weakness. Yet one thing more, remember I myself am a natural child, and to some might be an object of scorn."

Theodore was in love—Mr. Sedley was earnest in his solicitations, and Mary Anne—oh, how eloquent Mary Anne was! Theodore at length accepted the hand she offered—he married, and was happy. Nor had his wife and children

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ever reason to lament or recollect the repented crime of his youth, except when the remembrance of it cast a cloud over his brow, and forced him from their dear society, to indulge the salutary sorrow in temporary solitude. Meanwhile Mr. Sedley, contemplating with pride the active virtues of Theodore, used to say to himself with a tear of honest self-approbation:

"Society owes me a great deal. Had I given Theodore up to the laws of his country, he would not have lived to benefit and ornament it. Aye, well does the French proverb say, '*Qui n'est que juste est dur*;' and I bless the day when I ventured to forget the magistrate in the man."

"But was it right to forgive him? and would not persons act very unwisely and wickedly, who should pardon great criminals in general, and let them loose on society, in hopes that they might one day

or other form out sages, Howards, and lawgivers?"

Alas! there are few Theodores. Still, though for blood I would have blood, except in very few cases indeed, I venture to express my wishes that the punishment of death was not so dreadfully frequent as it is. I wish that our legislators would not be so lavish of life, that important gift, which no one can restore; but would, contenting themselves with inflicting such punishment on offenders as does not preclude hope, put it in their power, by a revision of their criminal laws, to bid the trembling wretch repent, and live."

NOTE.

I beg leave to give the following extract from the entertaining Memoirs of Mr. Cumberland, that veteran in the field of literature, whose mind, as rich and inexhaustible as the

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purse of Fortunatus, is always able to answer to his various demands on it, and has for years supplied an admiring world with the choicest stores of amusement and instruction.

"How liable he (Dr. Bentley) was to deviate from the strict line of justice by his partiality to the side of mercy, appears from the anecdote of the thief, who robbed him of his plate, and was seized and brought before him with the very articles upon him. The natural process in this man's case pointed out the road to prison. My grandfather's process was more summary, but not quite so legal.

"While commissary Greaves, who was then present, and of counsel for the college *ex officio*, was expatiating on the crime, and prescribing the measures obviously to be taken with the offender, doctor Bentley interposed, saying, 'Why tell the man he is a thief? He knows that well enough without thy information; [redacted] eest the trade which thou hast taken up is an unprofitable trade: therefore get thee gone; lay aside an occupation by which thou canst get nothing but a halter, and follow that by

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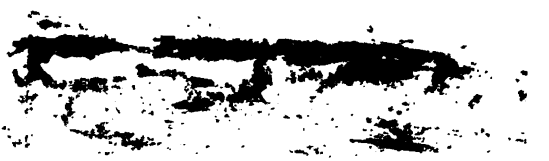
'which thou mayst gain an honest livelihood.'

"Having said this, he ordered him to be set at liberty, against the remonstrances of the bystanders, and, insisting upon it that the fellow was duly penitent for his offence, bade him go his way and never steal again.

"I leave it to those (says Mr. Cumberland) who consider mercy as one of man's best attributes, to suggest a plea for the informality of this proceeding."

And I request such of my readers as may be inclined to censure with bitterness the lenity of Mr. Sedley, to recollect, that if he erred, he had the honour of erring in the same manner as did the great and excellent Dr. Bentley.



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